

Downtown Gardner

Wayfinding



Signage Plan

AUGUST 2023



Stantec





Acknowledgements

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Table of Contents

01 / Project Introduction

02 / Introduction to Wayfinding

03 / Existing Sign Inventory

04 / Community Engagement

05 / Design Options

06 / Recommended Signage Package

07 / Appendices

Brand Options Summary

Fabricator Drawings

Public Survey Results





GARDNER CITY HALL



1

Project Introduction

Goals
Scope/Timeline
Study Area

This report was prepared on behalf of the City of Gardner through a “Massachusetts Downtown Initiative Technical Assistance Program” competitive grant from the State Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD).

The City staff of Gardner provided oversight and review of the wayfinding plan and final report. In addition, city businesses, residents, visitors, and employees provided insight and input into this study through a series of stakeholder meetings.

On behalf of DHCD and the City of Gardner, the study team would like to thank all stakeholders and participants for their constructive inputs to this process.



Introduction

Showing Gardner the way

Gardner is well-positioned to be a vibrant city that attracts a wide range of visitors. Gardner has a rich history and often draws in visitors for destinations located on the edge or just beyond the downtown. Although some of the service-related destinations downtown continue to attract a consistent flow of daily visitors, the City continues to make improvements that increase the ambiance and walkability of downtown to improve the attractiveness of Downtown to new visitors. Redevelopment projects are planned for centrally-located buildings that have experienced longer vacancies and will be bringing in new residents. Phase III of the Downtown Improvements Project is well underway with notable changes on the south side of Crystal Lake. Bird e-scooters have been made available to the public to aid in mobility between downtown destinations. With this growing variety of destinations, good wayfinding becomes valuable for attracting and retaining new visitors. Although people primarily drive to visit Gardner, visitors by transit or bicycle also have unique needs for navigation both prior to and upon arrival.

Currently, there is a wide range of styles and systems for the Downtown's existing wayfinding signage, which have been layered upon each other over time. This has resulted in an outdated and counter-intuitive system that 1) doesn't capture visitors at the appropriate locations to help them navigate to popular destinations (particularly regarding public parking facilities), 2) lacks clarity and consistency in which destinations are featured on signage and how they are identified, and 3) doesn't speak to a distinct visual brand or identity that is unique to

Downtown Gardner.

The City of Gardner applied for technical assistance provided by Stantec through the Massachusetts Downtown Initiative of the State's Department of Housing & Community Development (DHCD). The assistance included developing a wayfinding plan to kickstart a longer-term goal of completely overhauling the downtown's wayfinding signage system. This plan is intended to provide guidelines about future sign placement and early design concepts with the expectation that a more permanent approach and more comprehensive planning and public engagement process for signage will take place in the future.

With the understanding that the City intends to completely replace all existing (City-owned) signage, the tasks for this specific plan included:

- Conducting an inventory of all existing signage
- Identifying "gaps" in existing sign types based on the destinations the signs are intending to direct to and the logical navigation points of different modal users
- Investigating how existing signage might be blended to inform one, common brand/style
- Developing a recommended signage inventory approach
- Developing specification drawings for two (2) signage design options that could be fabricated immediately following the plan

At the initiation of this project, the Project Team identified a set of goals that they hoped to achieve throughout the wayfinding plan process. These can be seen on the following page.

PROJECT GOALS

- ▶ Establish an inventory of existing signage to help inform future wayfinding needs and priorities
- ▶ Better direct visitors to key destinations downtown
- ▶ Improve connectivity to and between parking areas
- ▶ Create a sense of arrival for visitors using various modes of travel
- ▶ Develop a strategy for integrating or improving the unity of existing wayfinding
- ▶ Create a brand and signage system that is reflective of the City's character

Technical Assistance Tasks

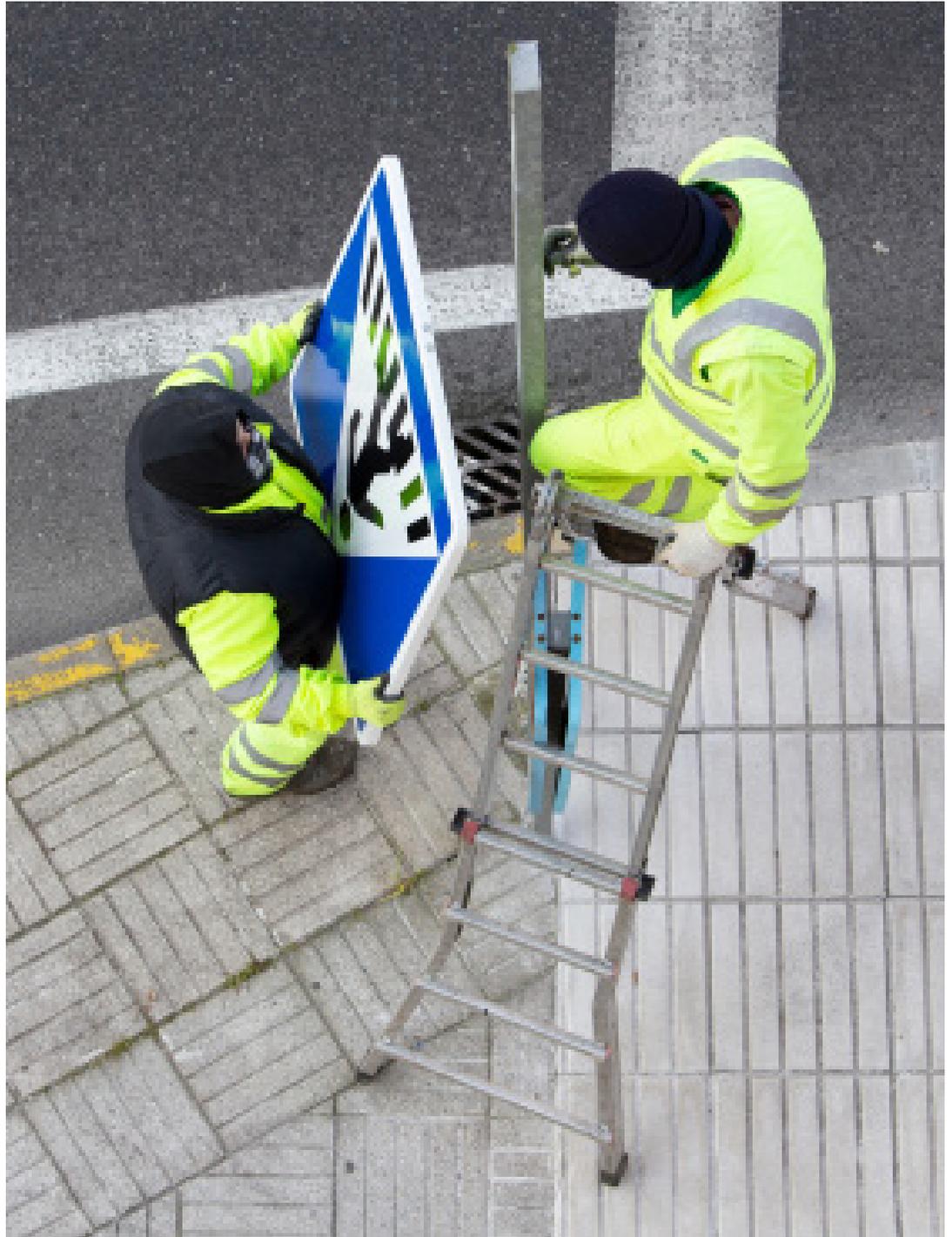


Anticipated Outcomes of this Effort

- Develop up to (2) preliminary design options for each of the following sign categories:
 - Directional (for vehicles and pedestrians)
 - Identification
 - Information

which can be further customized or can inform potential future (permanent) sign designs

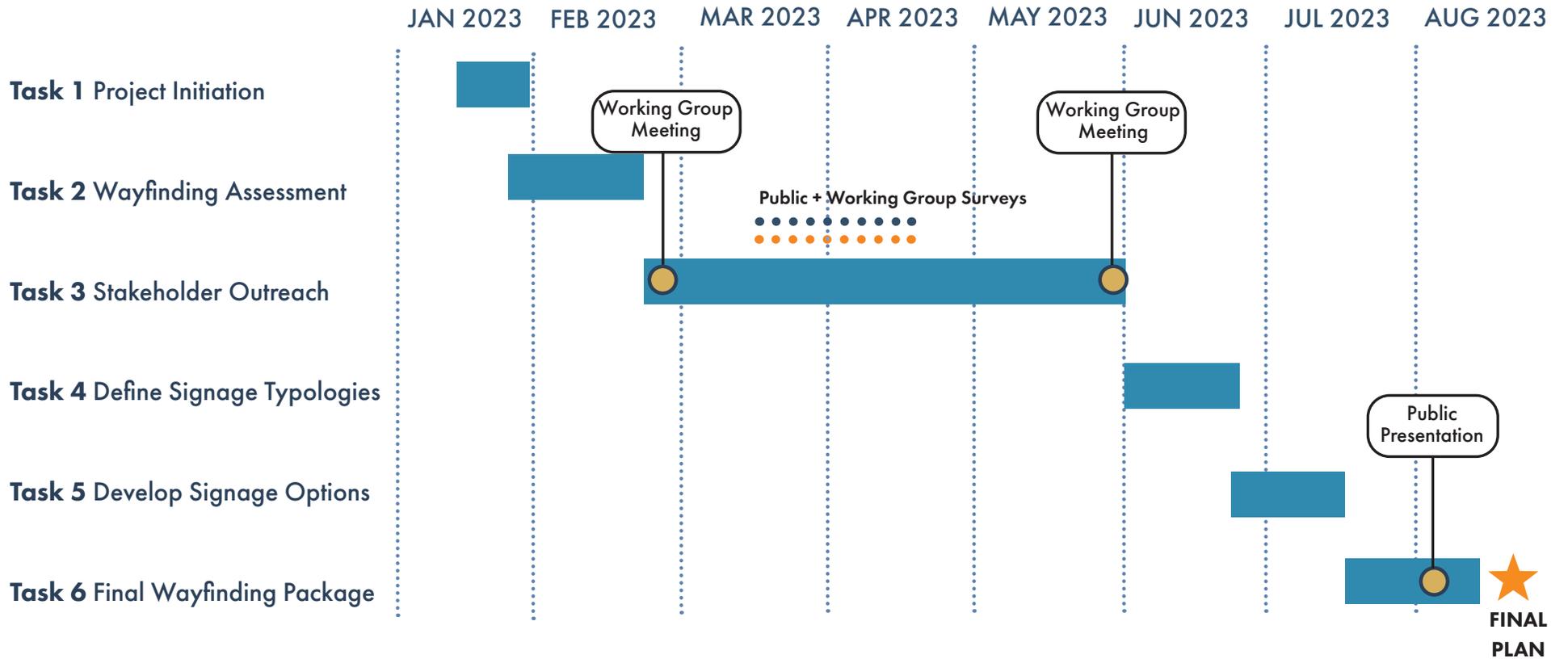
- Prepare **concept-level** files ready for sign fabricator to develop/finalize/print for standard metal signs on posts
- Identify recommended signage locations to address the navigation needs for prioritized destinations



Potential Future Outcomes Beyond this Effort

- Execute a comprehensive branding and marketing strategy or conduct an in-depth public engagement process
- Develop a comprehensive signage suite of many options
- Design complex signage options that incorporate special materials
- Plan and execute a phased fabrication and installation program

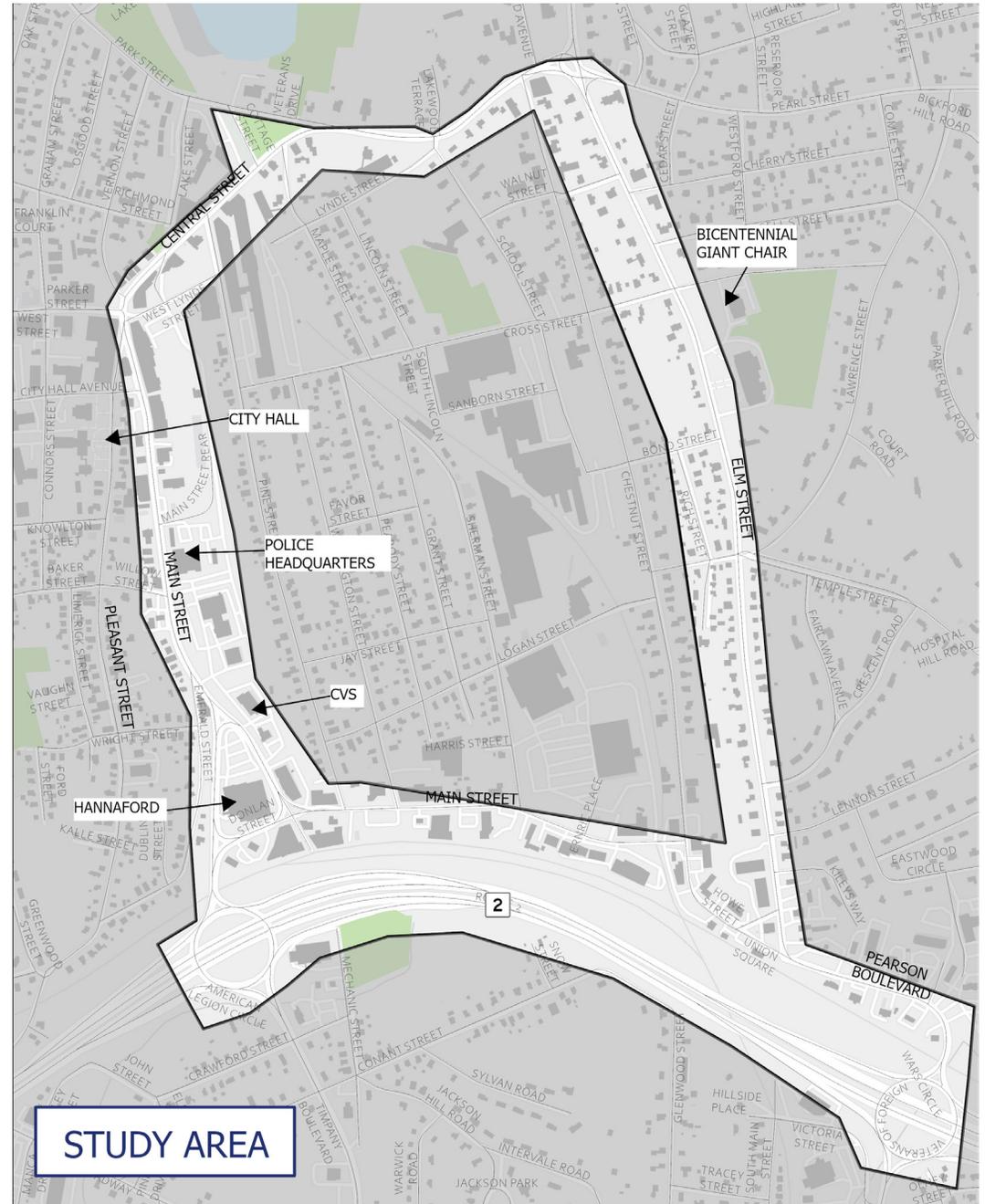
Project Timeline



Project Boundary

The Project Team defined a boundary for the Wayfinding Plan to encompass a loop that includes the key routes to/from the downtown. This includes the entirety of Main Street, Elm Street between Route 2 and Central Street, Central Street between Elm Street and Main Street, and Route 2 between the Timpany Boulevard and Pearson Boulevard roundabouts. These routes also provide access to other important destinations that are included in the evaluation but beyond the project boundary, including Crystal Lake, the public schools complex, Timpany Plaza and Gardner Plaza Shopping Center. Generally, the study area segments along Main Street and Elm Street are considered to be walkable to and from key destinations in the core of downtown Gardner. With the understanding that one of the primary roles of wayfinding signage is to serve driving, biking, and walking visitors unfamiliar with Gardner in particular, the boundary did not include the core residential areas near downtown.

Although the signage inventory and other analysis for this study is primarily constrained within this boundary, areas beyond the boundary were also found to be in need of improved wayfinding to better support navigation to downtown Gardner and other commercial, civic and recreational destinations. The principles and guidelines shared in this document are intended to support future efforts by the City which can be deployed beyond the downtown.









2

Introduction to Wayfinding

Wayfinding Signage Typologies

Wayfinding Signage Typologies

Different Signs for Different Purposes

Wayfinding signage can typically be categorized within the following four, general typologies. A few examples have been included for each category, but the options are truly endless for how signage might be designed.

Each typology has a unique function. Ideally, all four are designed to coordinate with each other in their general design as part of a cohesive overall wayfinding system.



GATEWAY

What it does-

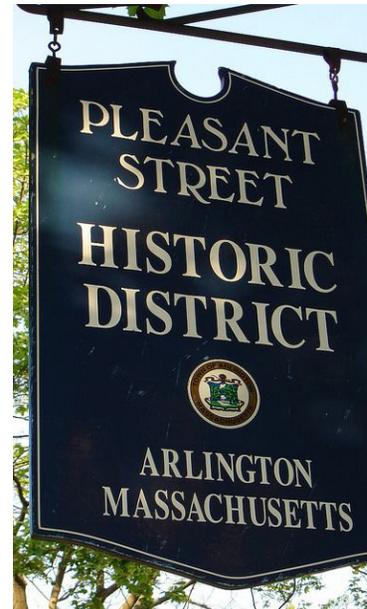
Creates a sense of arrival (usually from a primary access route) and defines the boundary of a district or downtown (e.g., welcome sign)



IDENTIFICATION

What it does-

Identifies landmarks or other points of interest by name or symbol. It might include information about hours of operation, services provided, etc.





DIRECTIONAL

What it does-

Directs you toward a specific area or destination (such as key parking locations), typically with the use of arrows



INFORMATION

What it does-

Provides information about where you are located in the context of an area (such as with maps in a visitor kiosk), or details about a destination (e.g., seasonal access, only)



BEST PRACTICE-

Principles of Wayfinding Signage

Be memorable-

Visual language should build on brand identity to drive economic growth

Be inclusive-

Stakeholders and the public should take part to create a sense of ownership

Be multimodal-

Improve navigation/safety for all types of travel and expand connections

Be scalable-

Have built-in flexibility as a kit of parts that can be tailored and used as the town grows and other signage needs change

Be planned-

Have a phased approach (including budgeting considerations) to reduce the time to achieving a fully installed and coordinated sign system

Different Scales for Different Users

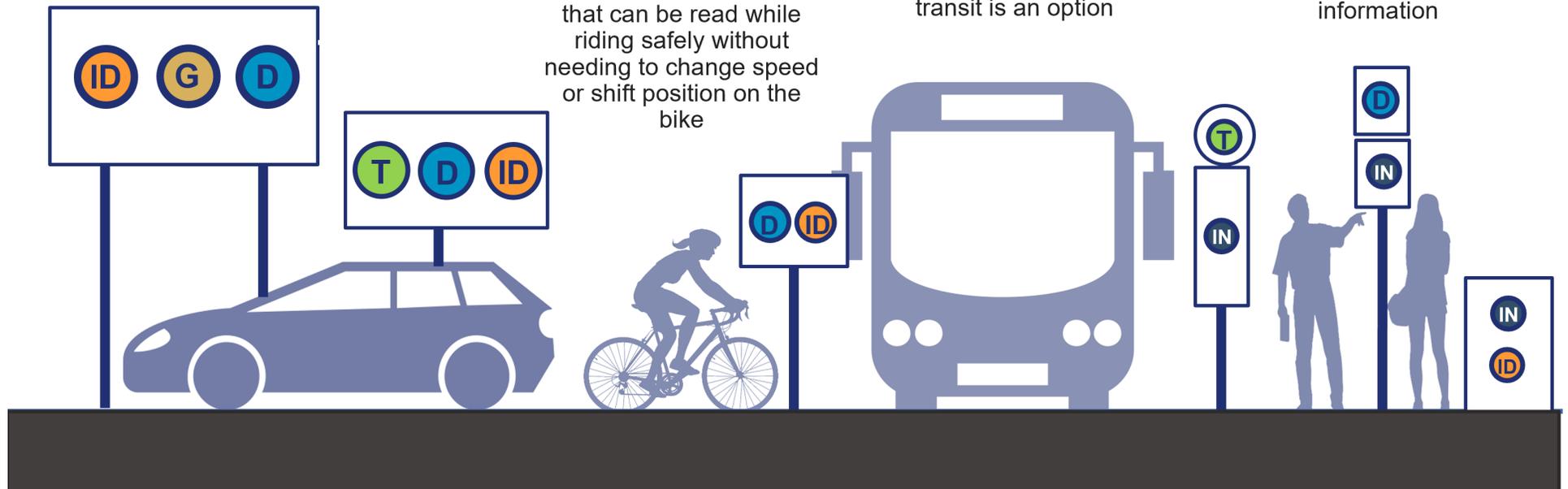
Within each of the four signage typologies, there may be a wide range of different sizes of signs. The graphic below demonstrates how different scales of signs should be used to help users of different modes navigate effectively and safely.

Vehicles need signage that can be seen from a greater distance, directing them to popular driving destinations to be able to give drivers time to navigate safely or adjust a route, as needed

Bicyclists need signage that can be seen from a distance and at a level that can be read while riding safely without needing to change speed or shift position on the bike

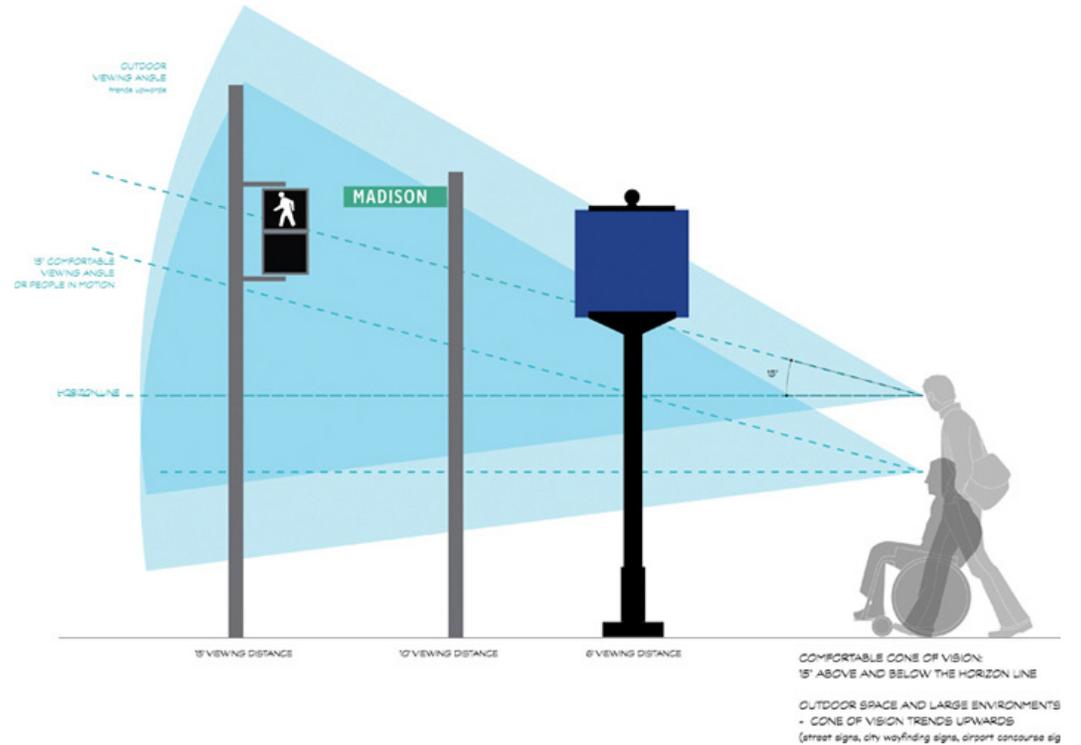
Transit-riders need signage that can be seen both while riding/driving, and also while walking to help them better plan trips and understand where transit is an option

Pedestrians need signage that is visible both from a distance to be able to adjust walking routes to/from parking (or other areas), and also visible at eye level to offer more detailed information



Making Signage Accessible for All

The size of wayfinding signage is important for increasing its visibility, but other considerations such as sign placement (height, positioning on a sidewalk, proximity to other street elements that might obstruct signs when viewed from a distance, etc.) should be considered as well to make sure that visitors of all abilities have clear views of the signs.





Stakelis
Thermax
BOSCH
PLUMBING & TV

BOUCHER
Landscape, Inc.
118 North Main Street
Canton, MA 01921

Any business that
receives
in the
month



3

Existing Sign Inventory

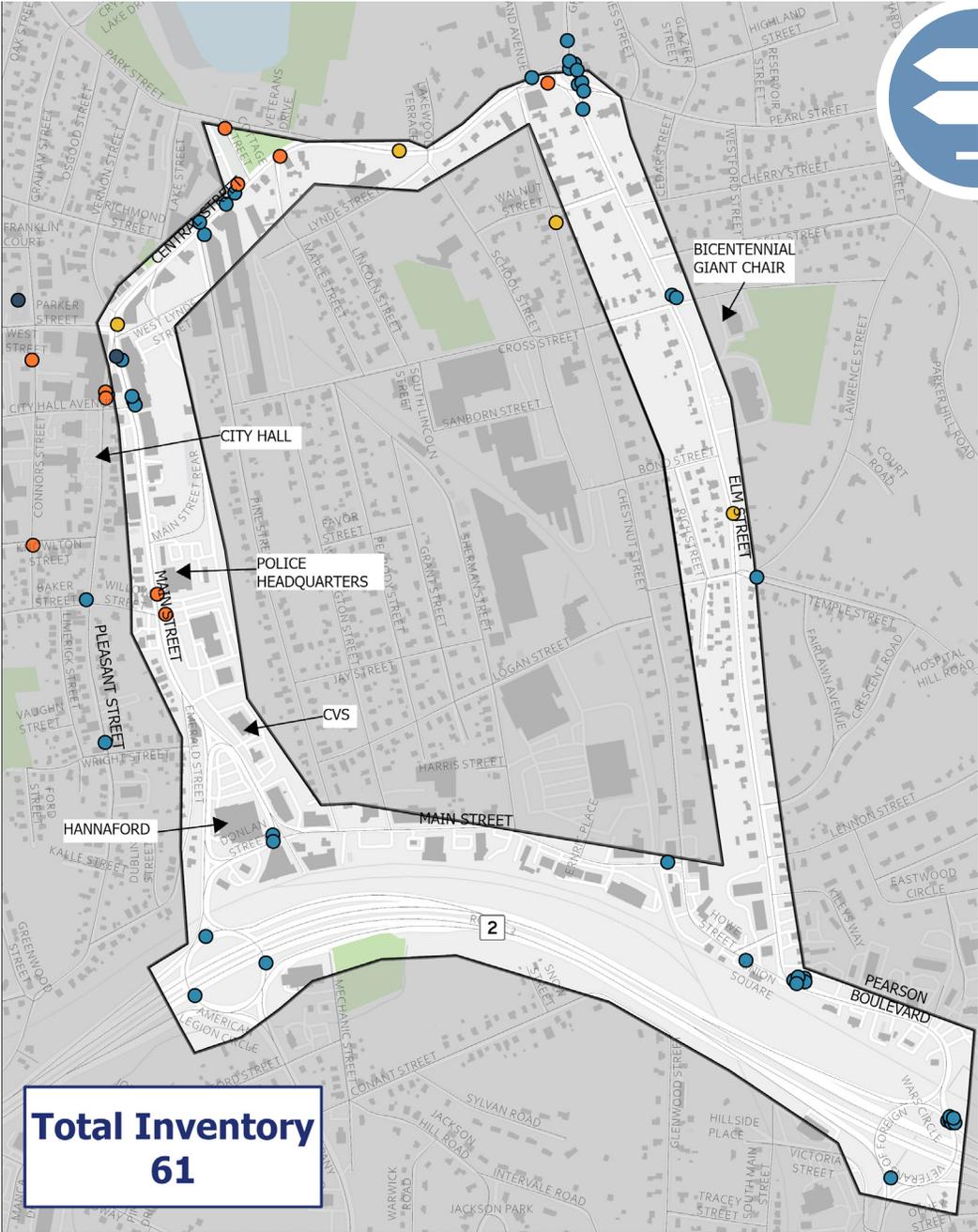
- Overall Inventory
- Gateway Signs
- Directional Signs
- Identification Signs
- Information Signs
- Transit Signs



Existing Signs Overall

General Observations

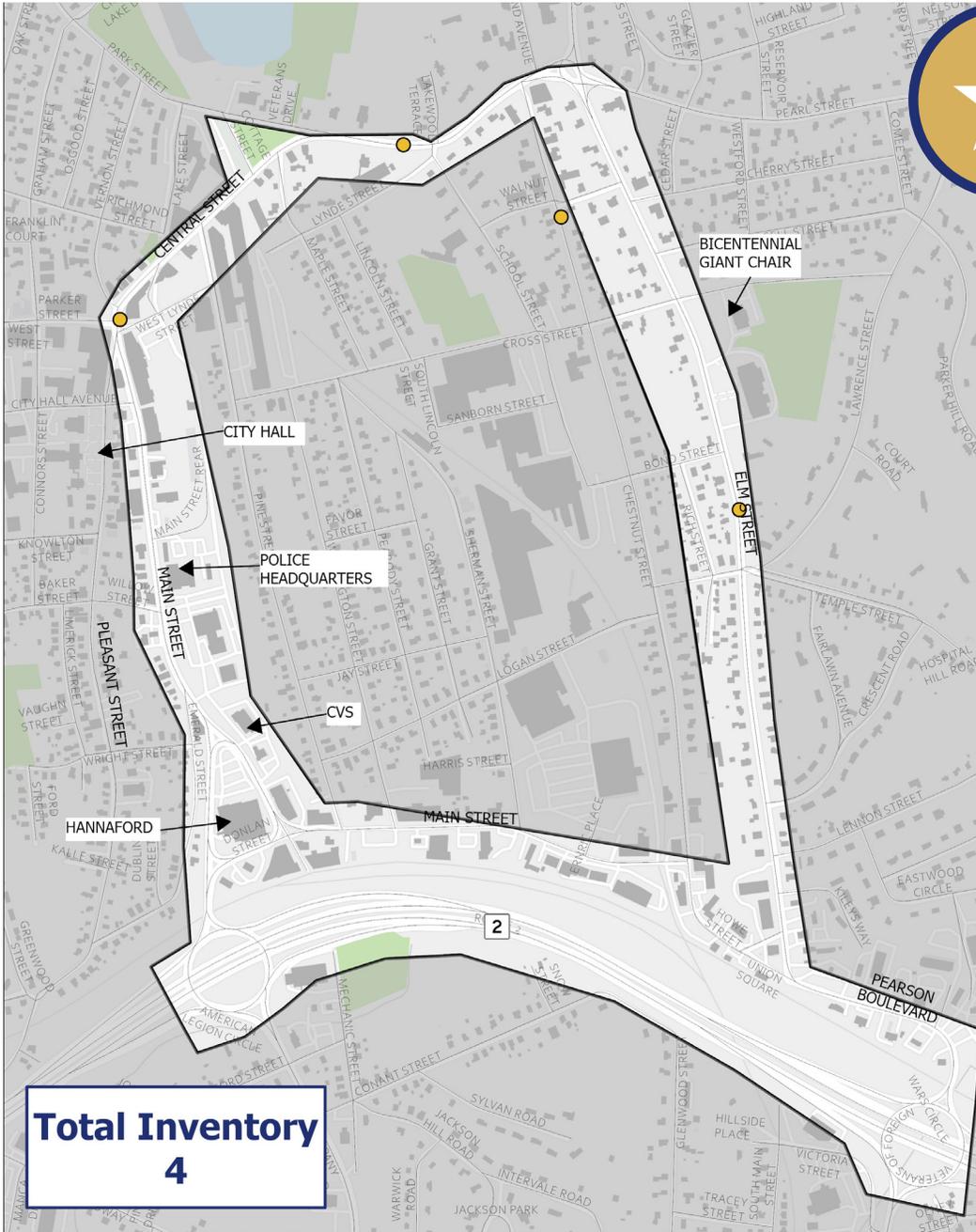
- There is minimal signage directing people to specific destinations, especially at key intersections, such as the 5-point intersection at the north end of Main Street
- Although the "Chair City" label is included on light post banners and on decals on street signage, there is no consistent or recognizable City brand on the City-owned, permanent signage for the downtown area
- Pedestrian-level signage is generally lacking, to direct people from parking to downtown destinations, or to provide other information
- There are several areas where multiple sign types are clustered together. This causes confusion and also creates visual clutter
- There are many instances where the font size of a sign is too small for passing vehicles to read quickly
- Some parking directional signs are too simple and require further clarification about the type of parking available (e.g., whether it is paid)



Total Inventory
61



Existing Signs Gateway



Gardner Examples

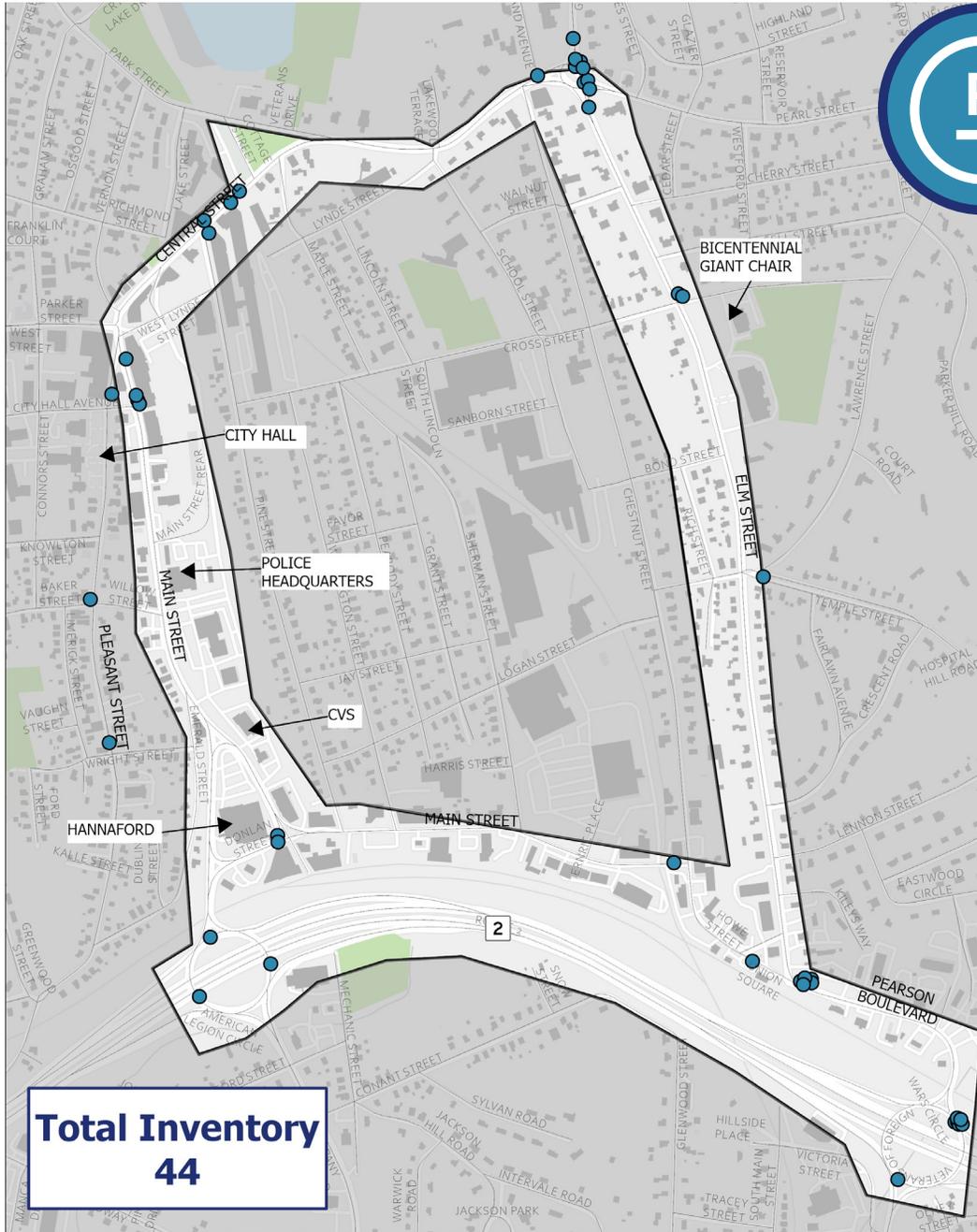


Observations

- Although there are some signs welcoming visitors to downtown Gardner, their size and placement doesn't provide a strong sense of arrival
- The largest of the existing gateway signs (above left) features a red color consistent with street signs but otherwise doesn't include other details or symbology reflective of a distinct brand
- The other gateway signs are extremely small and of a different design, however some are placed at locations that could be perceived as the natural boundaries of downtown



Existing Signs Directional



Gardner Examples

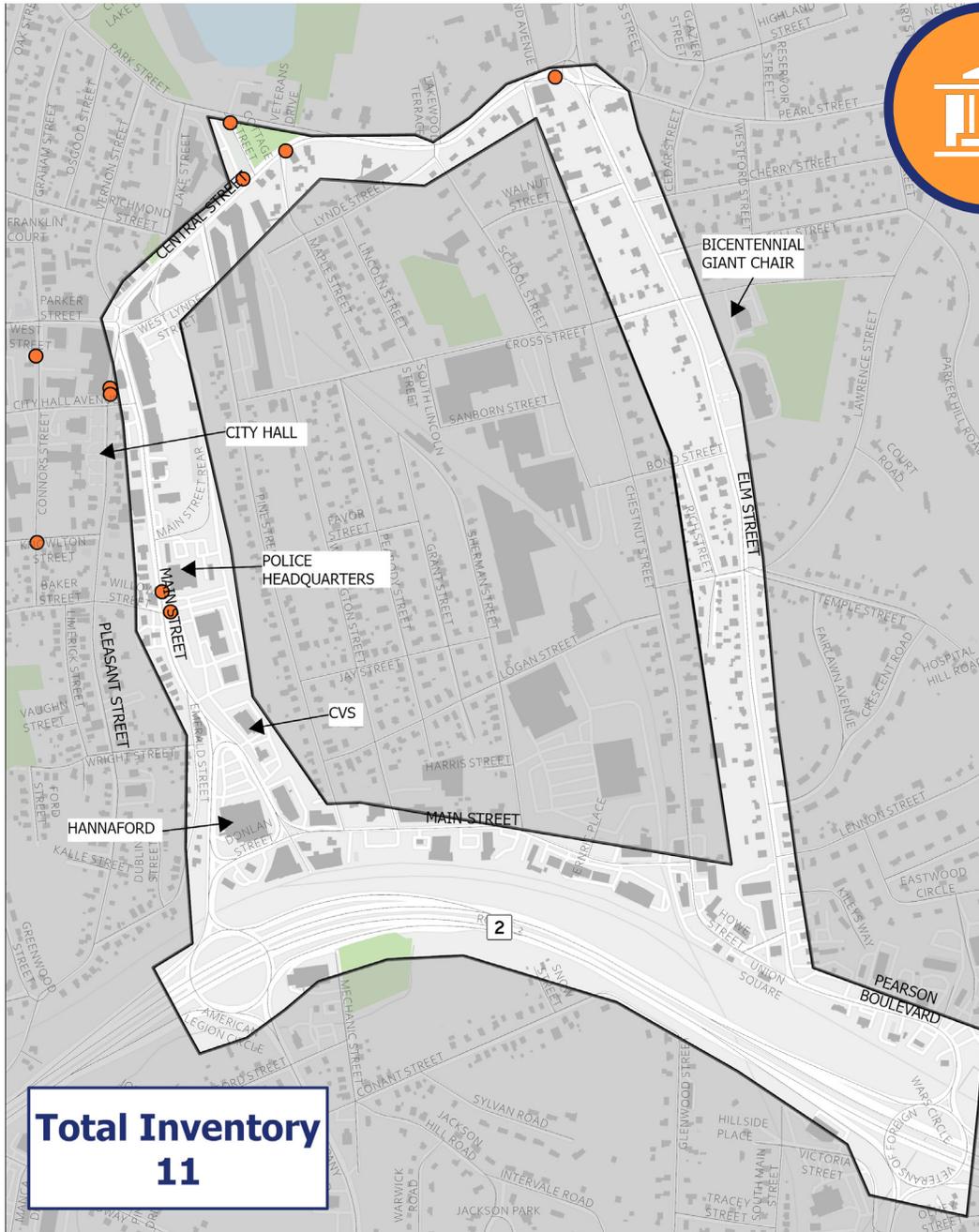


Observations

- Several areas have a high density of signage placed near each other, causing confusion and visual clutter
- There is a significant lack of pedestrian-level directional signage throughout downtown
- Most directional signage in downtown is functional only, with no present or consistent City brand/identity to distinguish the signage or to create visual cohesion



Existing Signs Identification



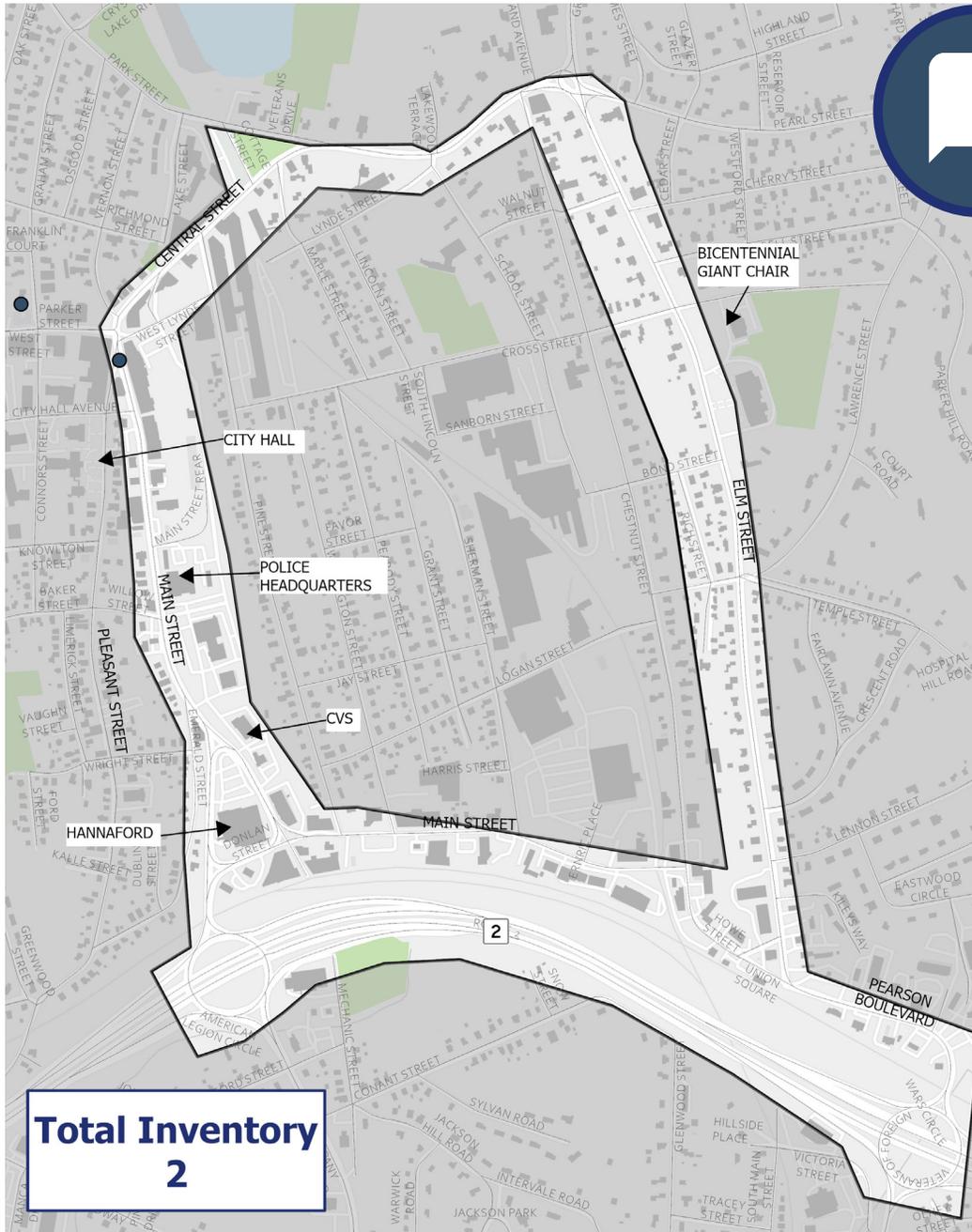
Gardner Example



Observations

- There is variation in the amount of information that is included on the signs for different destinations
- Privately-owned destinations utilize their own identity/branding on signage, with no clear indication of being associated with a defined downtown identity
- There is a range of materials and varying level of design detail and quality of signage
- Some identification signage is of a similar size and appearance to street signage so does not particularly stand out as being a different sign type
- Parking lot names are sometimes included directly on street signage, which creates confusion and does not increase visibility

Existing Signs Information



Gardner Example



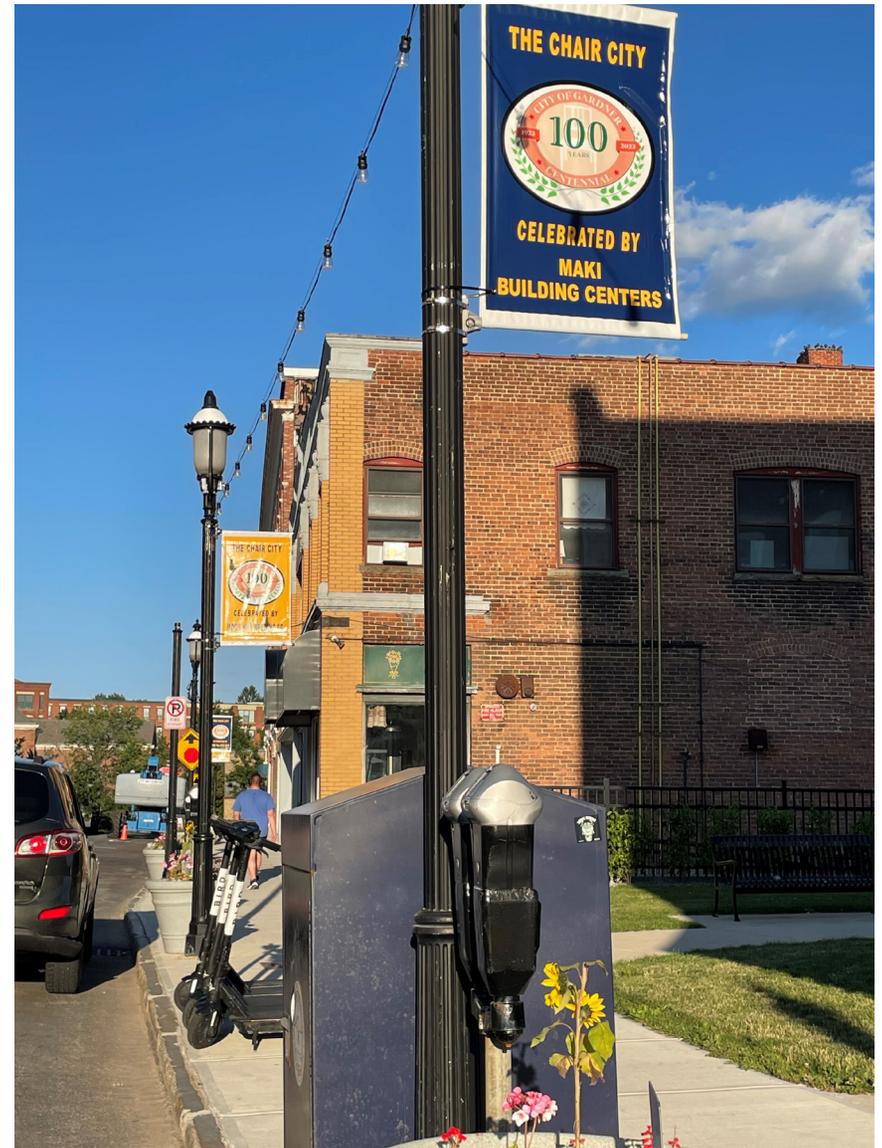
Observations

- There is limited informational signage to guide pedestrians, particularly at public parking lots
- Information signs relating to historic sites or points of interest are too small or not positioned in a way that optimizes visibility

Other Existing Signs Observations



Example of "sign overload" at the Route 2 rotary leading to Pearson Boulevard



Example of visual identity which has been tied into temporary banner signage along Main Street





4 **Community Engagement**

Wayfinding Committee
Targeted Survey

Wayfinding Committee

Balancing Best Practices and Preferences

To gather a diverse range of feedback from key organizations that provide services to Gardner, and to maintain transparency throughout the planning process, a Wayfinding Committee was established for this effort.

The Wayfinding Committee was comprised of individuals representing:

- City of Gardner (Economic Development, Community Development & Planning, City Council, Building Commissioner, and DPW Departments)
- Gardner Redevelopment Authority
- Gardner Square Two, Inc.
- Greater Gardner Chamber of Commerce (board members)
- Mount Wachusett Community College
- Timpany Crossroads

Two virtual meetings were held with the Committee with the following goals:

MEETING #1- February 22, 2023

Share the sign inventory and educate about signage typologies

- Identify priorities for which destinations should be included on signage
- Understand general preferences regarding design components of existing signage in Gardner

MEETING #2- May 31, 2023

- Share the team's process for identifying new signage locations and other details to be included as part of the recommended sign inventory
- Gather comments on early design components of potential signage

Key Comments from the Wayfinding Committee



Existing Signage

- The system should be simplified and consolidated
- There is opportunity to better represent downtown's identity
- If downtown was identified by different districts, these areas might make sense- Main Street Shopping/Dining District, Government Center District, and the upcoming TOD District; however, the smaller size of the downtown might create more confusion if divided into districts
- The level of details on signage should depend on the type of user it is targeting
- The rail bridges are perceived boundaries for those trying to navigate downtown
- Some components of existing signage might be nice to build upon

Wayfinding Committee Survey

A survey was prepared for members of the Wayfinding Committee to better understand perceptions about existing signage, both regarding their effectiveness for visitors who are unfamiliar with downtown Gardner, and to establish preferences regarding specific components of existing signage designs (shown below). The survey also asked respondents to rank a list of downtown destinations in order of priority for how they might be identified on future signage. Priority was encouraged to be defined based on factors such as perceived volume of visitors for particular destinations, the visibility of destinations in regards to their geographic visibility and access points, and other factors.



Comment:

- "Choice of one style and consistency would help first time and frequent visitors as well as residents and employees of the city navigate through and around not just downtown but throughout the entire city."

SIGN TYPE	Materials?	Lettering (i.e., font)	Colors used?	Shape of sign?	Design Style?	I don't like any components	Other Comments
	X	X	X	X	X		Not a fan of the top design, include The Chair
					X	X	Sign is too small and too high up
	X	X	X	X	X		Appropriate for businesses
		X	X	X	X	X	Kind of ugly
	X	X	X	X	X		Clean looking

An exercise was conducted to identify the visual preferences Committee members had regarding existing signage designs in the City. This exercise demonstrated that there was no consistent pattern to the design components which people had a generally positive association with or felt like they could potentially be introduced into future signage designs. While no single design component stood out, and no sign was universally appreciated, feedback was nonetheless valuable for guiding the recommended sign package of this interim effort.

General Public

Identifying Preferences

With the understanding that the City may wish to install interim signage until a longer-term approach is pursued, the Project Team determined they would solicit further feedback from the public (flyer for the survey shown to the right). The results from this survey may be used to inform the direction of a future, more comprehensive public engagement process regarding the brand/identity of Downtown Gardner and the design of long-term signage.

The survey was developed to better understand perceptions regarding the effectiveness and designs of existing signage, as well as to gauge associations to characteristics and motifs that could potentially be representative of Gardner in the development of a City wayfinding brand. This feedback helped inform the recommended signing package for this particular effort.

39
participants

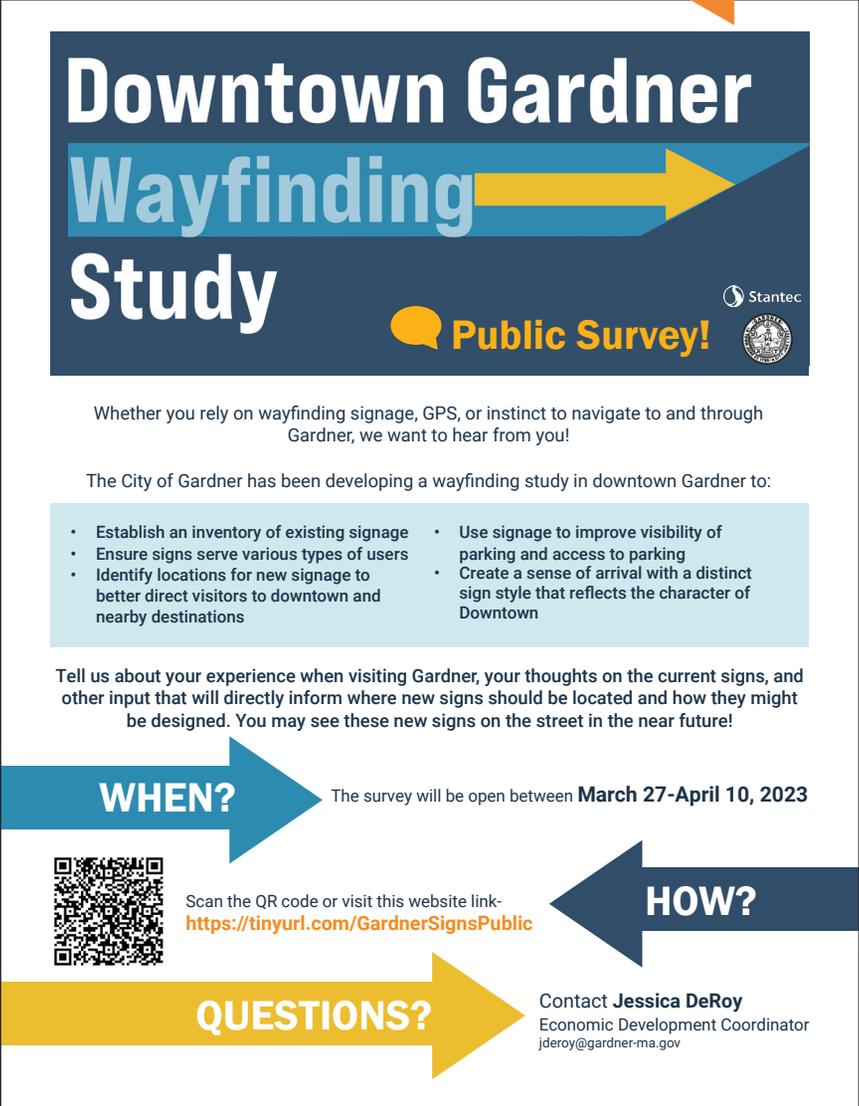
Recurring Themes from Survey Comments

Existing Signage

- The signs are not noticeable due to their size
- Public parking is not highlighted
- Amount of signage in some areas causes confusion, especially for new visitors
- Lack of cohesion in style

Future Signage

- Pedestrian information signage (including maps) is desired as well as other pedestrian-scale signage
- Should be uniform and consistent in design
- A simple approach is best while also being inclusive of downtown destinations
- Signage should attract and support downtown vitality



Downtown Gardner
Wayfinding Study 

 **Public Survey!** 

Whether you rely on wayfinding signage, GPS, or instinct to navigate to and through Gardner, we want to hear from you!

The City of Gardner has been developing a wayfinding study in downtown Gardner to:

- Establish an inventory of existing signage
- Ensure signs serve various types of users
- Identify locations for new signage to better direct visitors to downtown and nearby destinations
- Use signage to improve visibility of parking and access to parking
- Create a sense of arrival with a distinct sign style that reflects the character of Downtown

Tell us about your experience when visiting Gardner, your thoughts on the current signs, and other input that will directly inform where new signs should be located and how they might be designed. You may see these new signs on the street in the near future!

WHEN? The survey will be open between **March 27-April 10, 2023**

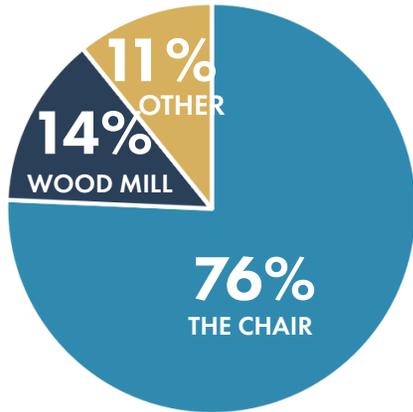
 Scan the QR code or visit this website link-
<https://tinyurl.com/GardnerSignsPublic>

HOW?

QUESTIONS? Contact **Jessica DeRoy**
Economic Development Coordinator
jderoy@gardner-ma.gov

Public Survey Data Summary

Considering that a symbol on future signage will be designed/refined following this survey process, which of the following do you think best represents Gardner as a potential symbol?



These are the top 5 types of destination that customers/visitors visit in Downtown Gardner.

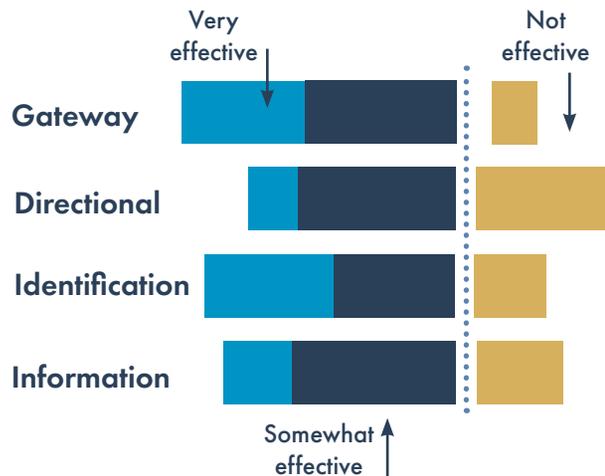


Key Characteristics

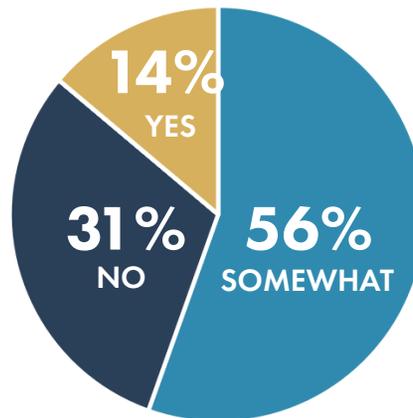
The following are some of the words shared when the public was asked to describe the character of Downtown Gardner-

- Friendly/Welcoming
- Cozy
- Successful
- Community-Minded
- Rustic
- Dynamic
- Cutting-Edge

How effective do you generally think the existing wayfinding signs in Gardner are in serving their purpose?



Do you think the existing signage in Gardner is reflective of the City's character?



Other Ideas Shared

- Arrows should continue to be used on directional signage, particularly for signs identifying the hospital
- The Chamber of Commerce should be included on signage, as it serves many communities and is somewhat difficult to find
- Areas near Hannafords and the Police Station could benefit from additional signage





5

Design Options

Design Development

Design Components

Other Design Considerations

Design Development

The Core Components of Wayfinding Signage Design

One of the primary tasks for this plan was to develop early design concepts and potential design options for future wayfinding signage. The City intends to manufacture signs in the near future based on the guidance provided from this study. The City may wish to pursue a more comprehensive and collaborative effort in the future but a simple process of narrowing down the options for the five core design components of a wayfinding sign was developed for this plan.

1. Color
2. Motif
3. Font
4. Size
5. Shape

These will be described in greater detail in this section.



1.
Color

2.
Motif

3.
Font

4.
Shape

5.
Size

Design Consideration- Existing Signage

The following pages identifies some of the features of the city and characteristics that inspired the project team's design component options.

Discussions with the Project Team and Wayfinding Committee revealed that there weren't many particularly strong attachments to the various design components evident in the existing signage in downtown today. However, there were more positive associations generally with signage that incorporates higher quality materials.



1. Color

Design Components

Colors are often used as a tool in wayfinding signage design to help users quickly differentiate between different types of destinations, services, or geographic areas. The examples to the right demonstrate some of the many effective approaches that could be utilized.

In Gardner, discussions with the City and the Wayfinding Committee revealed openness to using color to differentiate between types of destinations, such as 'Municipal Services', or 'Shopping/Dining.' With this in mind, and other inspiration found throughout the planning process, a selection of color palettes were developed for potential signage. For each palette, a dominant color is featured along with secondary colors which could potentially represent different destination categories.



BEST PRACTICE-

Principles of Wayfinding Signage

Multiple Colors

If using more than one color, there should be enough contrast between them so that people with varying levels of colorblindness are able to differentiate

Functionality

Deeper colors help white text pop out more and be highly visible

The following color palette options were shared with the Wayfinding Committee-

Option 1- Existing Identity Variation

Inspiration: Builds from existing City website branding. Compatible with City seal, Chamber of Commerce, Wachusett College branding.



Option 2- Historic

Inspiration: Red from The Chair, existing welcome signage, and historic structures depicted in postcards. Yellow and blue from the Blue Moon diner as representative of another distinct time period in Gardner.



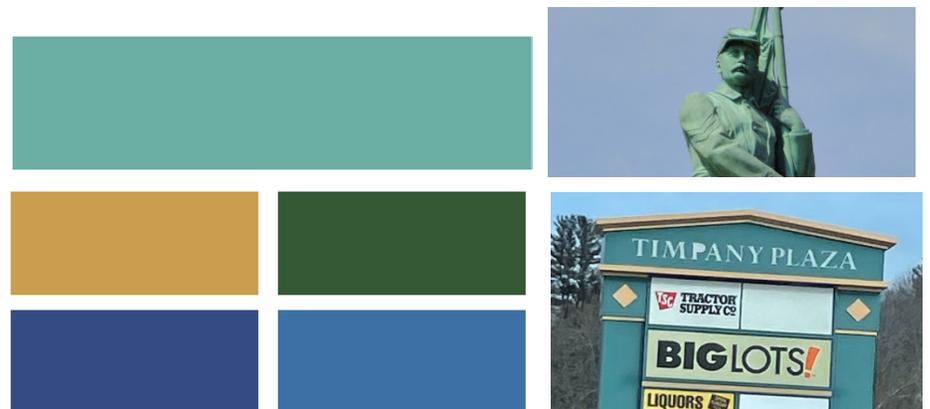
Option 3- Community Colors

Inspiration: Local cultural and recreational attractions, including the high school mascot, building materials like the Gardner Museum, and natural colors found in recreational areas, Dunn Heritage State Park



Option 4- Blending Old and New

Inspiration: Metal patina from distinct statues near downtown. Historic postcard coloring. Incorporates colors from Timpany sign brand.



2. Color

When wayfinding signage is used to define a district or municipality, a motif/logo is often incorporated to reinforce that a visitor is still within (or heading towards) the boundaries of an area. A motif may use a symbol that is representative of a unique feature of the built or natural environment, may reflect the general character, or reference other local symbology, such as a government seal. There are endless possibilities



BEST PRACTICE-

Principles of Wayfinding Signage

Level of Detail

Motifs should be simple and not overly detailed so they can be scaled easily to different sizes

Functionality

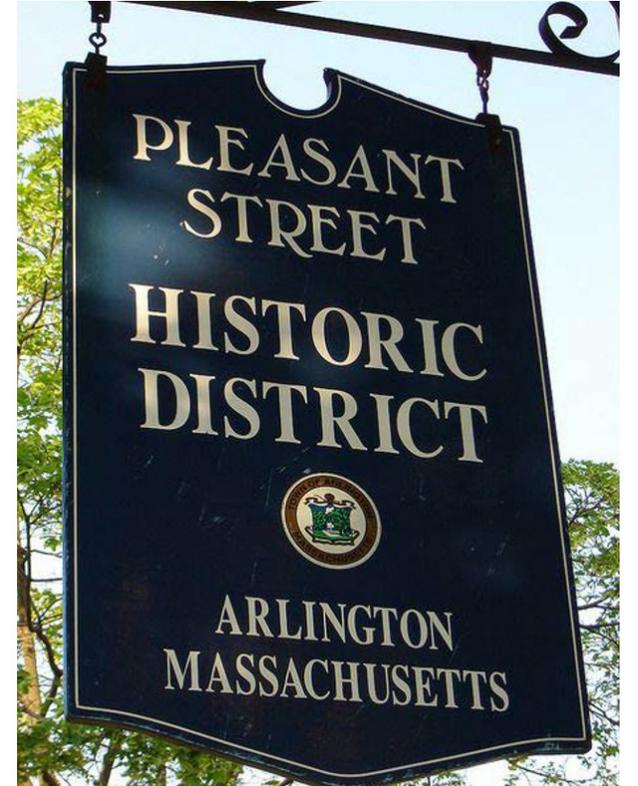
The motif should be recognizable from a distance but not distract from the information on the sign

Timelessness

The design should avoid techniques or styles that are distinctly "of the moment" so that it is still appealing years later

for how a motif could be integrated, in terms of scale and proportion. A few simple examples are shown on this page.

Several early design concepts of motifs were developed for this wayfinding plan which are intended to be further developed through future efforts. The concepts were informed by various sources regarding the character of Downtown Gardner, both currently and how it would like to evolve. The three concepts which were shared with the Wayfinding Committee are identified on the opposite page. Both a monochrome and multi-colored example version are included for context to demonstrate how a motif might look in different formats.



The following early concepts were shared with the Wayfinding Committee (to be further developed by the City following this plan).

Option 1- Vibrant Economy

Inspiration: Highlights downtown businesses/ shopfronts as the dynamic drivers of downtown

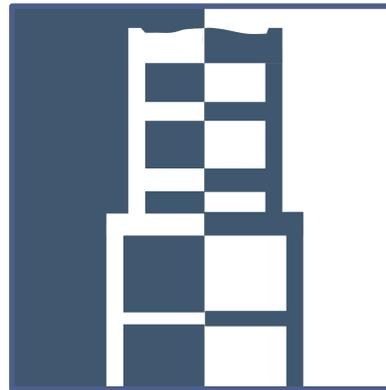
“Rays” demonstrate a sense of activity and excitement



Option 2- The Chair Reimagined

Inspiration: Reinterpretation of the chair to differentiate from symbology used on City branding

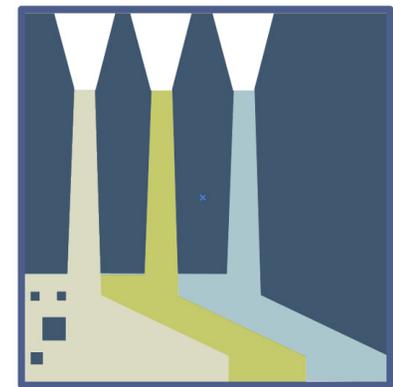
Split design represents the historic and modern periods of Gardner, different but connected by the Chair



Option 3- Mill Industry and Legacy

Inspiration: Modern interpretation of Gardner’s distinct mill history but also speaks to industry, generally

Represents a sense of collaboration/unification of 1) services, 2) businesses, and 3) cultural establishments that constitute the liveliness of downtown



3. Font

The single most important purpose of a wayfinding sign is to **clearly communicate information**. As such, the font used on signage is one of the most important aspects of its design. Best practice guidance recommends that signage lettering incorporates a sans-serif font for optimal clarity/legibility. There are many options of sans-serif fonts, each with slightly different characteristics.

Several sans-serif fonts were selected for consideration for a potential Downtown Gardner wayfinding system because they offered some combination of the following characteristics:

- **Clean**
- **Crisp**
- **Timeless**
- **Friendly**
- **Confident**
- **Flexible** (look good with different motifs)

The fonts were shared with stakeholders and through the public survey using the same language and against the same color background for comparison purposes.



BEST PRACTICE-

Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) Guidance

Legibility

Sign legibility is a direct function of letter size and spacing. Legibility distance has to be sufficient to give road users enough time to read and comprehend the sign. Under optimal conditions, a guide sign message can be read and understood in a brief glance. The legibility distance takes into account factors such as inattention, blocking of view by other vehicles, unfavorable weather, poor eyesight, or other causes for delayed or slow reading. Where conditions permit, repetition of guide information on successive signs gives the road user more than one opportunity to obtain the information needed.

(From the MassDOT Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices and the Standard Municipal Traffic Code)

Principles of Wayfinding Signage Lettering

Font Family

Sans-serif fonts are the most legible (see sample below) as the "feet" and other details of serif fonts can skew or distort lettering as the distance from the sign increases. Unusual or "zany" fonts should not be used but those which are "universal," meaning they can be read quickly and easily by anyone.

Lettering Size

Recommended font size should be 1 inch for every 10 feet of viewing distance (important to consider for signs that are intended for different modes)



The following (non-proprietary) font options were shared with the Wayfinding Committee.

Option 1- BEBAS Neue Pro Exp Eb

DOWNTOWN GARDNER
Parking straight ahead

Option 2- Proxima Nova Medium

DOWNTOWN GARDNER
Parking straight ahead

Option 3- ITC Avant Garde Pro Bk

DOWNTOWN GARDNER
Parking straight ahead

Option 4- Bourton Base Drop

DOWNTOWN GARDNER
Parking straight ahead

Option 5- Mangal Pro

DOWNTOWN GARDNER
Parking straight ahead

Option 6- Futura PT Book

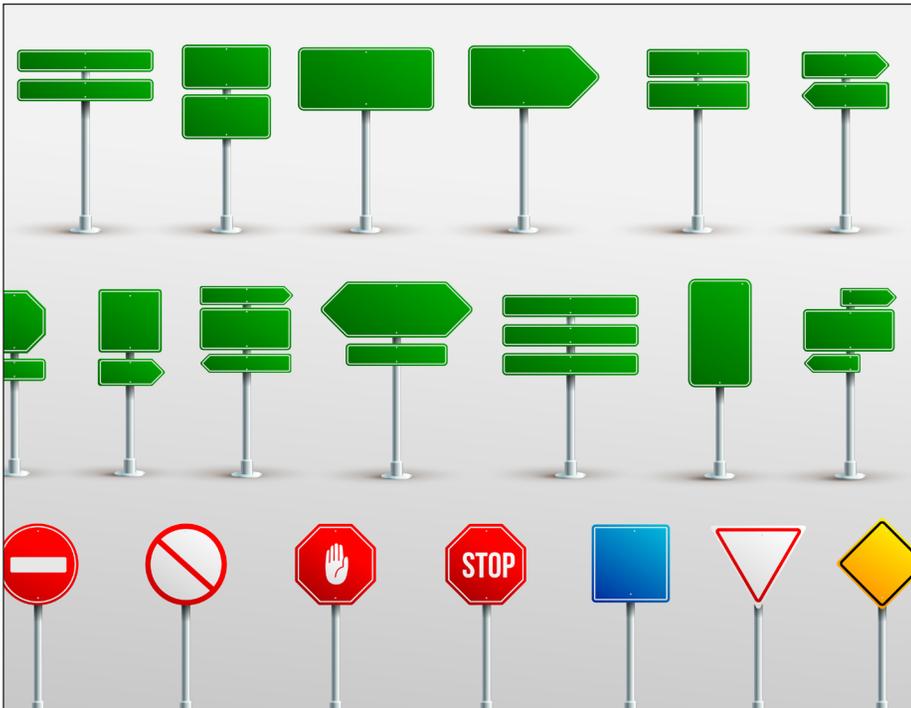
DOWNTOWN GARDNER
Parking straight ahead



4. Shape

Wayfinding signage systems can sometimes benefit from incorporating a distinct shape to distinguish it from other signage on the road. There are a few things to consider with sign shapes:

- Clarity-**
 Non-rectangular shapes should not be similar to those of State-owned roadway signage to reduce potential confusion about regulations associated with signs of particular shapes (such as a STOP sign or others shown in the last row below).
- Fabrication-**
 The complexity of the shape will have an impact on both the ease of the fabrication process and the cost of producing the sign.



5. Size

As demonstrated earlier in this document, the size of wayfinding signage is not one-size-fits-all and should be determined based on the type of user the sign is intended for (motorist, bicyclist, pedestrian). The size of a sign should also be informed by the speed limit of a road it is placed on (i.e., the speed of travel when a visitor passes a sign) and with consideration of the amount of lettering needed on the sign and best practice for lettering size.

An example from TXDOT's guidance on road sign sizes (based on the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices- MUTCD) is shown below for reference of general best practice.

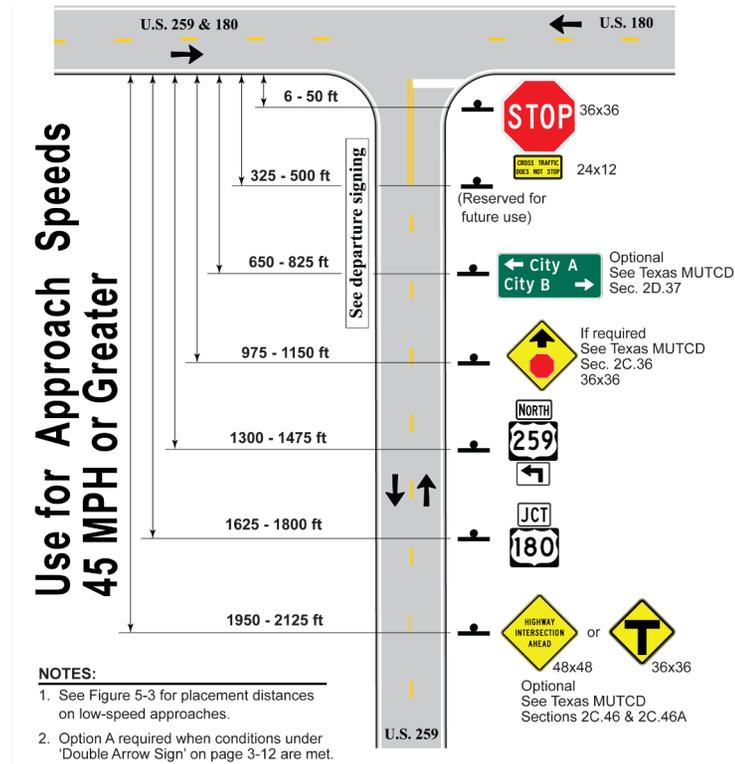


Figure 5-2. Convention for Sign Placement Distances on High-Speed Approach

Other Design Considerations

City Ordinances

When identifying where a new sign might be located, its size, how it is installed, and other details, local ordinances should be consulted first to confirm what is permitted in the zoned area of the potential sign. Downtown Gardner has specific requirements for different districts.

All of these parameters influence the amount of signage present in Gardner, the level of "sign clutter," and the ease of establishing a streamlined and consistent downtown signage system. While Gardner's ordinance pertains to signs on private property, its intent should also apply to public wayfinding signs and was considered in this study.

§ 675-970 Signs permitted in commercial or industrial districts.

Any principal use permitted in the commercial or industrial districts may erect a sign or signs subject to the following:

- A.** Wall sign or individual letter sign. A wall sign or individual letter sign shall not exceed four feet in height. A wall sign or individual letter sign on the exterior wall of the first floor of a building shall not exceed in area two square feet for each linear foot of the wall or 80 square feet, whichever is less. The length of signs of establishments occupying other than the first floor of a building shall not exceed six feet. No portion of a wall sign or individual letter sign shall project more than one foot from the face of the wall or above the wall of any building. In no case shall a sign project above a parapet wall. An establishment may divide the entire display area permitted herein into separate wall signs or individual letter signs, provided that the maximum height of each separate sign does not exceed the maximum height permitted herein and the sum of the aggregate width and area of each separate sign does not exceed the maximum permitted herein.
- B.** Secondary signs. If an establishment has a direct entrance into the establishment in a wall other than the front wall, there may be a secondary sign affixed to such wall, and if an establishment has a wall, other than the front wall, that faces upon a street or parking area, there may be a secondary sign affixed to such a wall; provided, however, that no establishment shall have more than two secondary signs in any event. This display area of all secondary signs shall not exceed one square foot for each linear foot of the walls or 40 square feet, whichever is less.
- C.** Directory signs. One exterior directory sign listing the name and location of the occupants of the premises may be erected on the exterior wall or pole of a building at each entrance or other appropriate location, provided that the display area shall not exceed one square foot for each occupant identified on the directory sign.
- D.** Directional signs. Directional signs may be erected near a street, driveway, or parking area if necessary for the safety and direction of vehicular or pedestrian traffic. The display area of each directional sign shall not exceed two square feet, and no directional sign shall be located more than six feet above the ground level if mounted on a wall of a building or more than 3 1/2 feet above the ground if freestanding. Directional signs shall not advertise, identify, or promote any product, person, premises, or activity but may identify the street name/number and provide directions.

Excerpt from Gardner's City Zoning Ordinance (last amended December 5, 2022)



FIRS

Salon
Since 1980

THE CHINA CITY
100%
BOUTIQUE
of HOPE

LOVE
STUDIO

FOR LEASE



6

Recommended Wayfinding System

Process Summary

Sign Design Options and Recommended Locations

Further Considerations

Process Summary

1

Refine what we know about existing conditions (details of signage and other considerations)

2

Identify key decision points when navigating to destinations (vehicles and pedestrians)

3

Determine optimal locations for new signage by typology

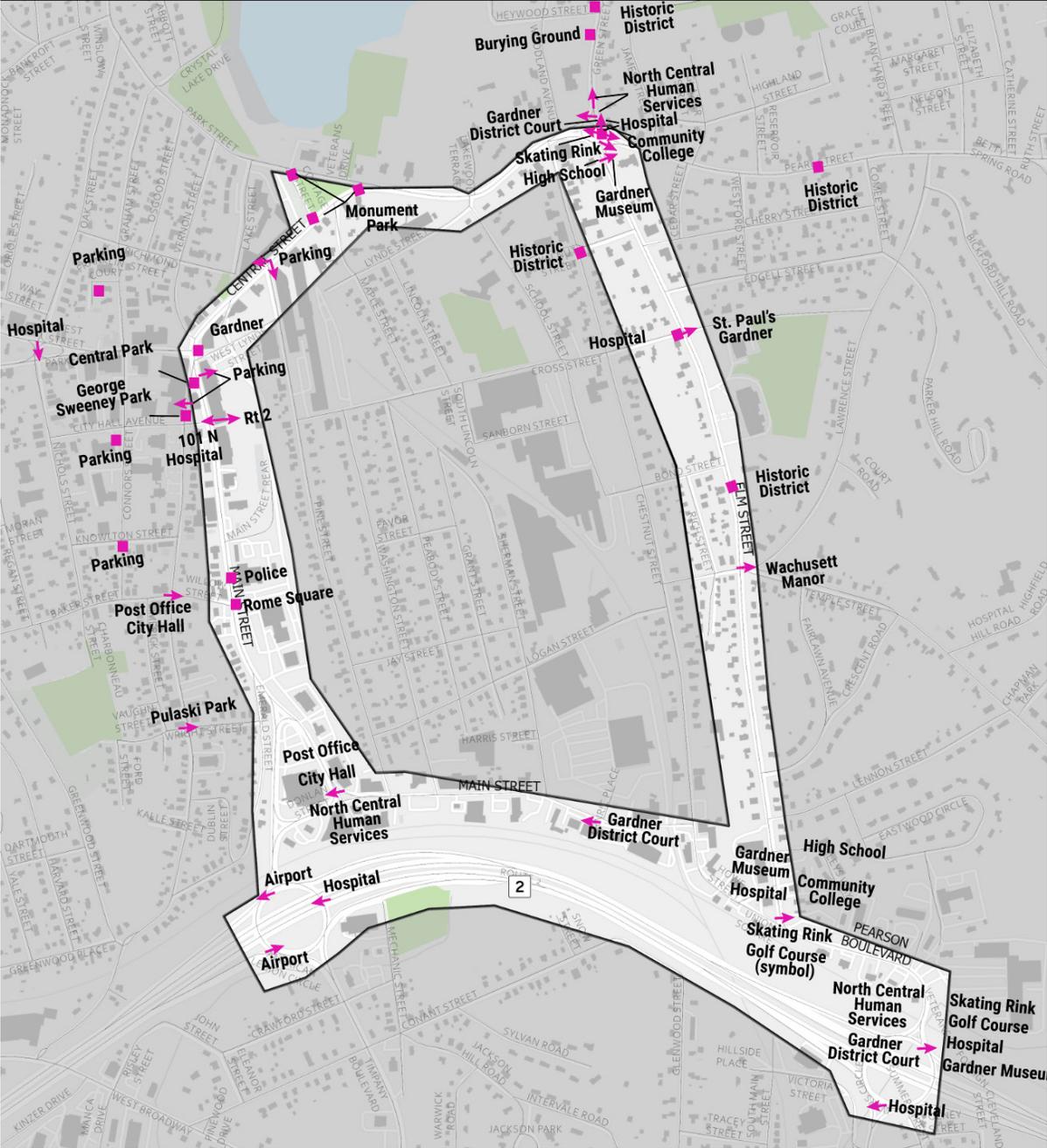
4

Design final signs language and arrows

1. Understand the details of existing signage

EXISTING DIRECTIONAL SIGNAGE

Beyond capturing a general inventory of where signs are located, this process included identifying the language on each of the existing **directional** signs in the Downtown Gardner area and determining which way the arrows on the signage were pointing. This was a critical exercise to understand how a driver is being directed to specific destinations, if the destination is being reinforced through sequential signage, and if there are gaps in the directional signage system for where a sign *should* be guiding a driver to specific destinations. For example, there are no signs along Elm Street left onto Center Street to direct access to the Levi Heywood Memorial Library, City Hall, or the Historic Commercial District. There are also no signs along Main Street or Elm Street for southbound drivers to direct access to Timpany Plaza or the Gardner Plaza Shopping Center.

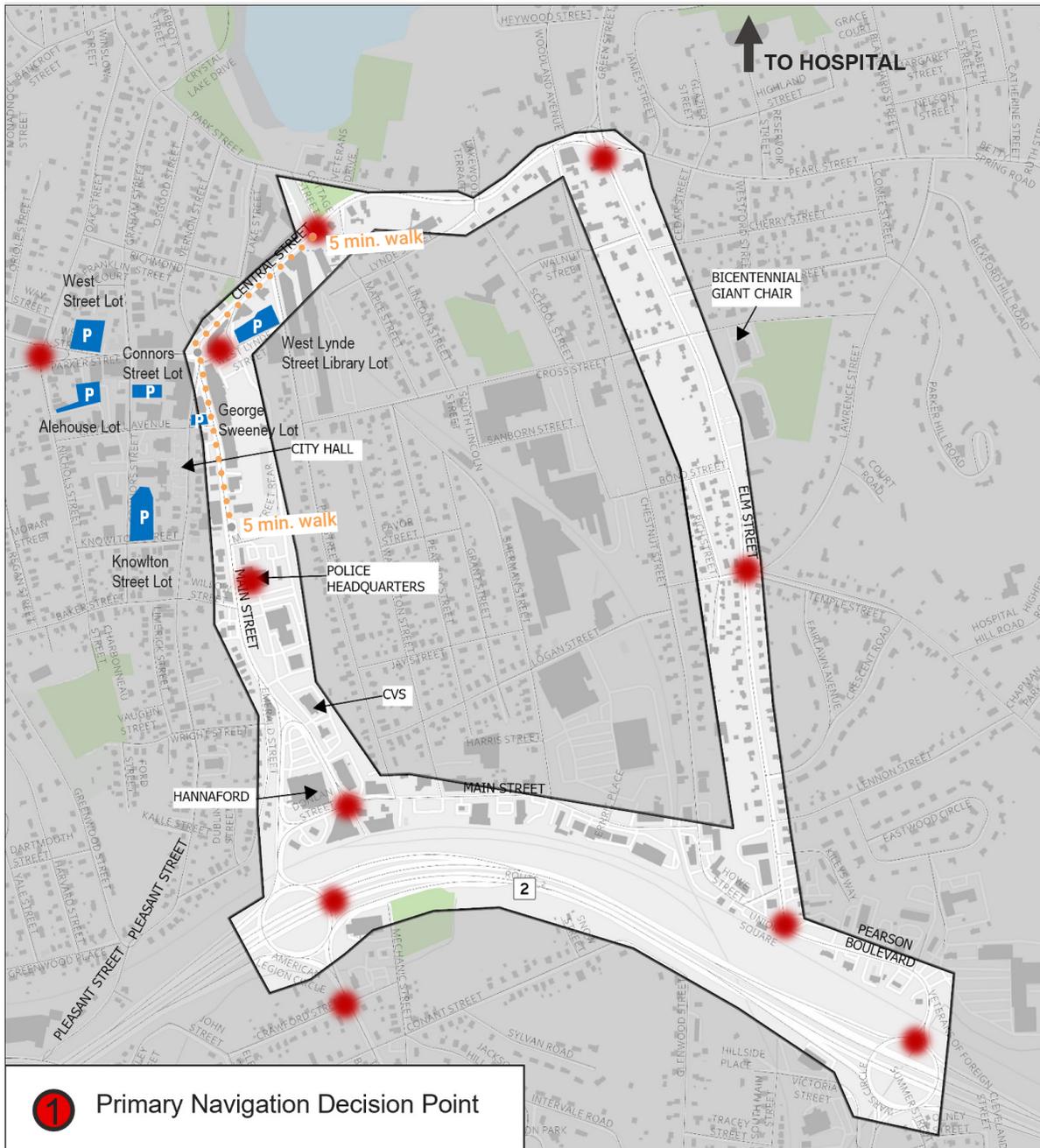


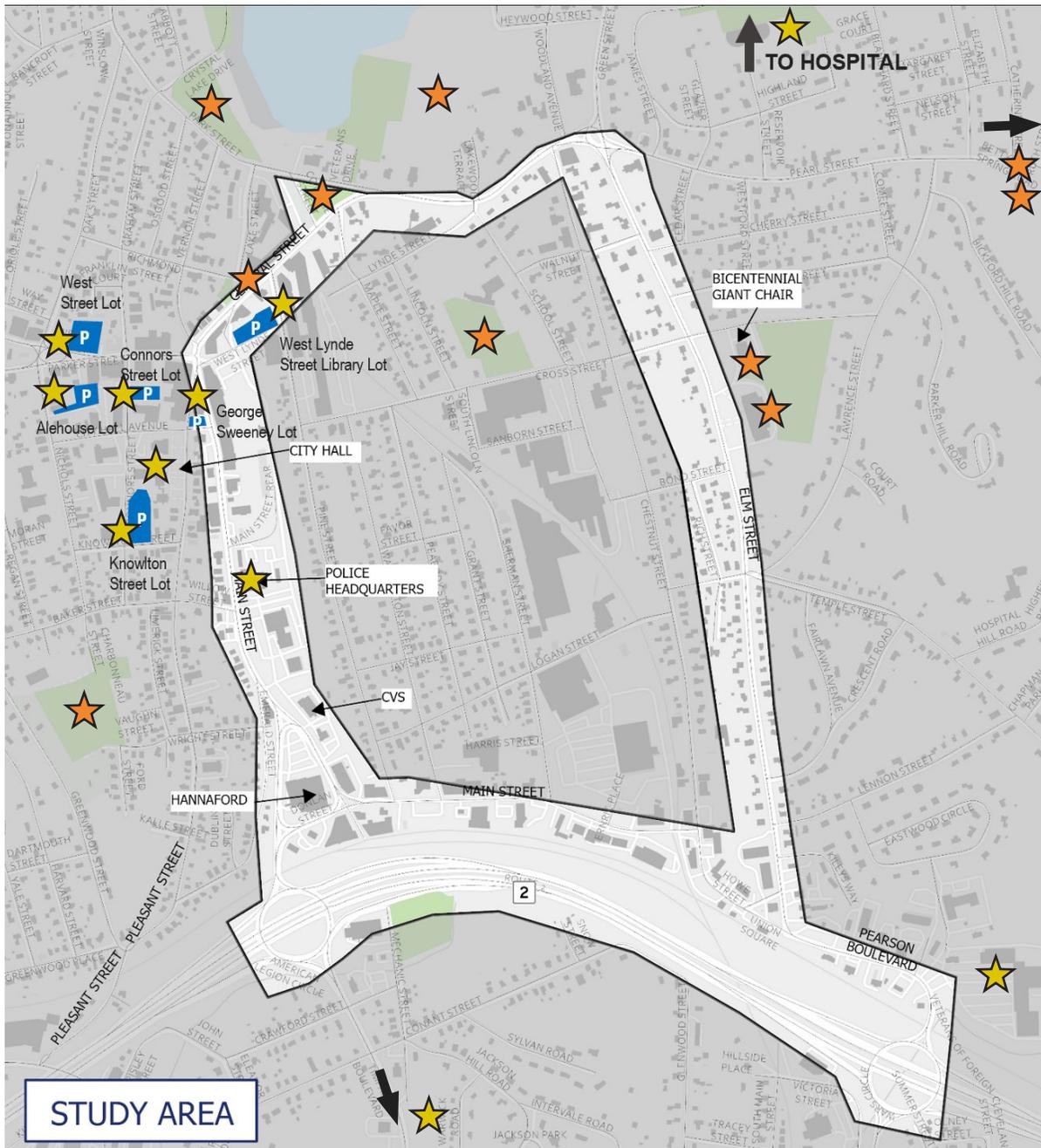
2a. Identify optimal navigation locations throughout the Downtown

PRIMARY DECISION POINTS

When a motorist is arriving into Downtown Gardner from various directions, there are key navigation points where signage is generally recommended for capturing their attention. This is particularly important for first-time or less-familiar visitors to Gardner. Primary destination navigation points are those areas (typically intersections) where a driver could potentially be diverted in a different direction than they intended. Secondary navigation points occur at less critical intersections but continue to reinforce the driver is still heading towards their desired destination. Tertiary navigation points reinforce destinations at a lesser level.

This exercise was also essential to understand where pedestrians are navigating from, with the understanding that most visitors "become" pedestrians after arriving in Gardner via a car or by transit. The map identifies the key public parking facilities in Gardner. These are shown in relation to the orange dotted lines which indicate an approximate 5-minute walking distance either heading north or south from the five-point intersection. This information adds an extra layer of understanding the time associated with navigating between potential destinations, such as those identified on the map.





2b. Identify significant and notable destinations for signing

PRIMARY DESTINATIONS

Following several discussions, the Project Team and Wayfinding Committee identified the destinations that should be included on the new directional signage based on a general hierarchy. These are shown in relation to public parking facilities.

SIGNIFICANT ★

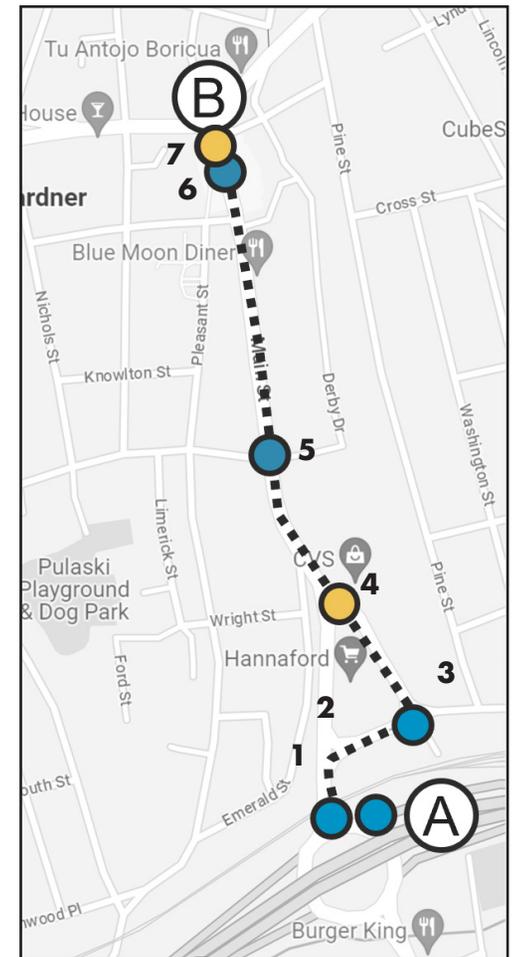
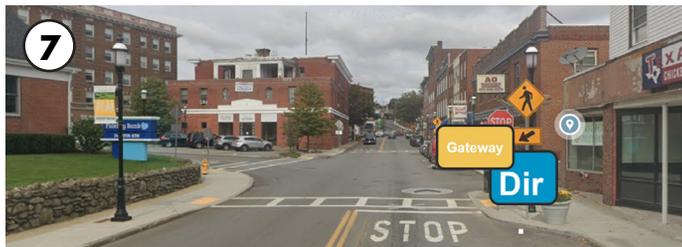
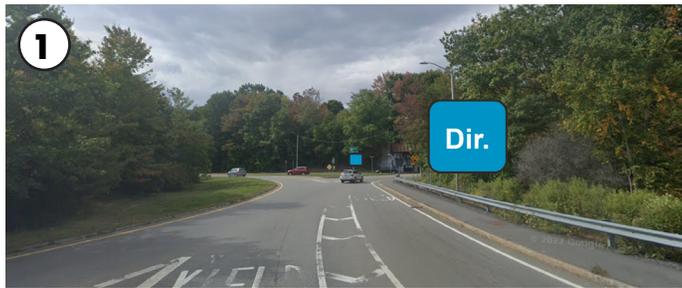
- Historic Downtown
- Police Department
- Hospital
- City Hall
- Public Parking
- South Business District
- South Gardner Village

NOTABLE ★

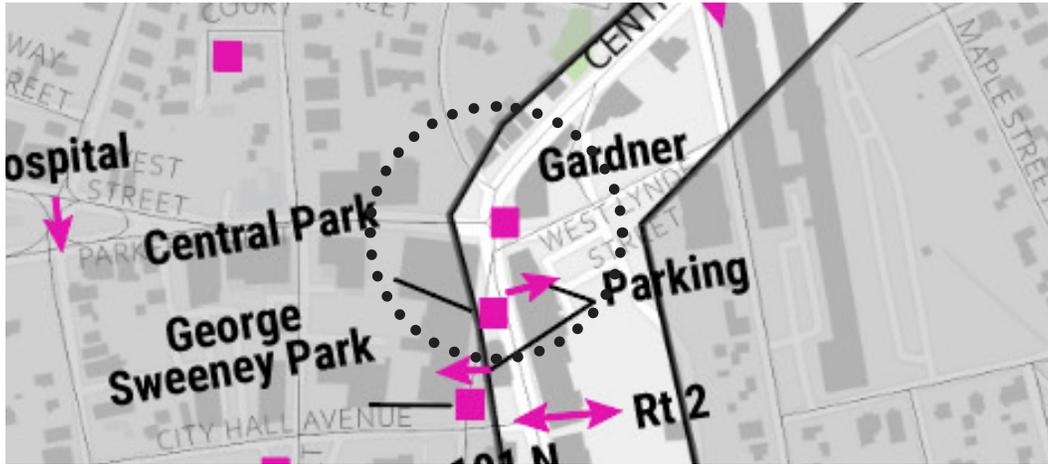
- Greater Gardner Chamber of Commerce
- Wachusett Community College
- Gardner Museum
- Greenwood Memorial Pool
- Monument Park
- Bicentennial Giant Chair
- Dunn State Park
- Gardner School Campus
- Gardner School Administration Building
- Jackson Playground and Skate Park
- Veterans Arena

3. Use a sample journey experience to visualize where which types of signage should generally steer a visitor towards a downtown destination

These images depict a general visualization of how a motorist could better benefit from increased wayfinding signage when arriving into Downtown Gardner from an example journey between **Point A (Route 2 exit ramp onto Route 68/Donlan Street)** and **Point B (5-point intersection in the center)**. The map demonstrates that signage should occur at a regular frequency that reinforces a driver as they arrive closer to their destination.





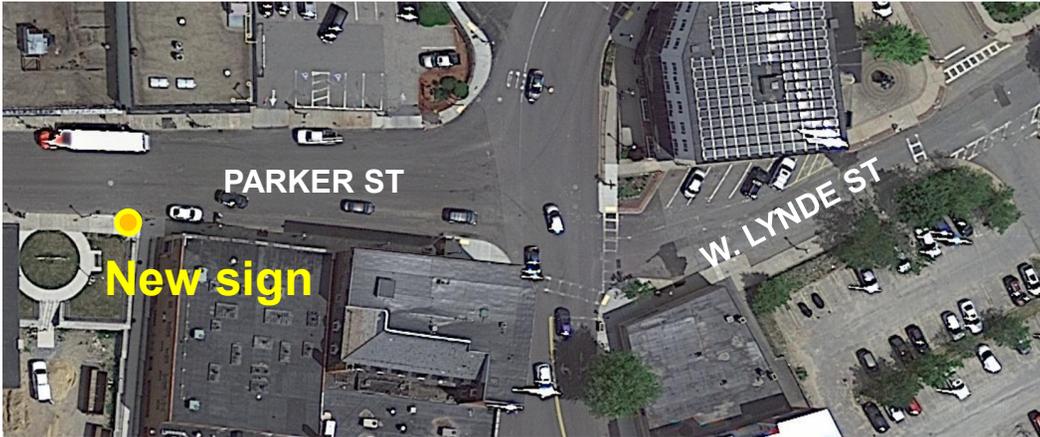


4a. Intersection-level needs

With an understanding of the general locations needed for new signage across the entire downtown, the next step was to zoom into each location or intersection to understand specific signage needs. The intersection to the left (Pleasant, Lynde, Central, Vernon, and Parker Streets) is a sample of this process. The downtown destinations that are logical for being included on wayfinding signage at this particular location are identified in bold text below. To direct people to the destinations below who may be arriving to the intersection from different approaches, the direction of the arrows for each destination has been broken down, more specifically.



- **City Hall**
 - Arrow pointing right from EB Parker St
 - Arrow pointing straight from WB Central St
 - Arrow pointing slight right from SB Vernon St
- **Hospital**
 - Arrow pointing slight right from NB Pleasant St
 - Arrow pointing slight left from EB Parker St
- **Police Department**
 - Arrow pointing right from EB Parker St
 - Arrow pointing straight from WB Central St
 - Arrow pointing slight right from SB Vernon St
- **Public Parking**
 - Arrow pointing right/straight from EB Parker St
 - Arrow pointing left/right from NB Pleasant St
 - Arrow pointing straight / left from WB Central St
 - Arrow pointing right/ slight left from SB Vernon St
- **Timpany Plaza / S. Gardner Village**
 - Arrow pointing right from EB Parker St
 - Arrow pointing straight from WB Central St
 - Arrow pointing slight right from SB Vernon St



4b. Sign-specific language

Going into even further detail, this step involves isolating the destinations and arrow direction needs applicable to one vehicle approach (eastbound, in this case), at the Parker/Lynde/Main intersection. By eliminating the details below which are relevant to the other intersection approaches, this results in understanding specifically what information would potentially be included on one specific proposed sign for eastbound drivers. The graphic on the bottom left demonstrates at a very general level the destinations/information that would be needed on this particular sign.

Stantec went through this exercise for priority recommended signage areas/intersections in the downtown core as part of developing an overall recommended signage inventory approach for the City to continue with in future signing efforts.



- **City Hall**

- **Arrow pointing right from EB Parker St**
- Arrow pointing straight from WB Central St
- Arrow pointing slight right from SB Vernon St

- **Hospital**

- Arrow pointing slight right from NB Pleasant St
- **Arrow pointing slight left from EB Parker St**

- **Police Department**

- **Arrow pointing right from EB Parker St**
- Arrow pointing straight from WB Central St
- Arrow pointing slight right from SB Vernon St

- **Public Parking**

- **Arrow pointing right/straight from EB Parker St**
- Arrow pointing left/right from NB Pleasant St
- Arrow pointing straight / left from WB Central St
- Arrow pointing right/ slight left from SB Vernon St

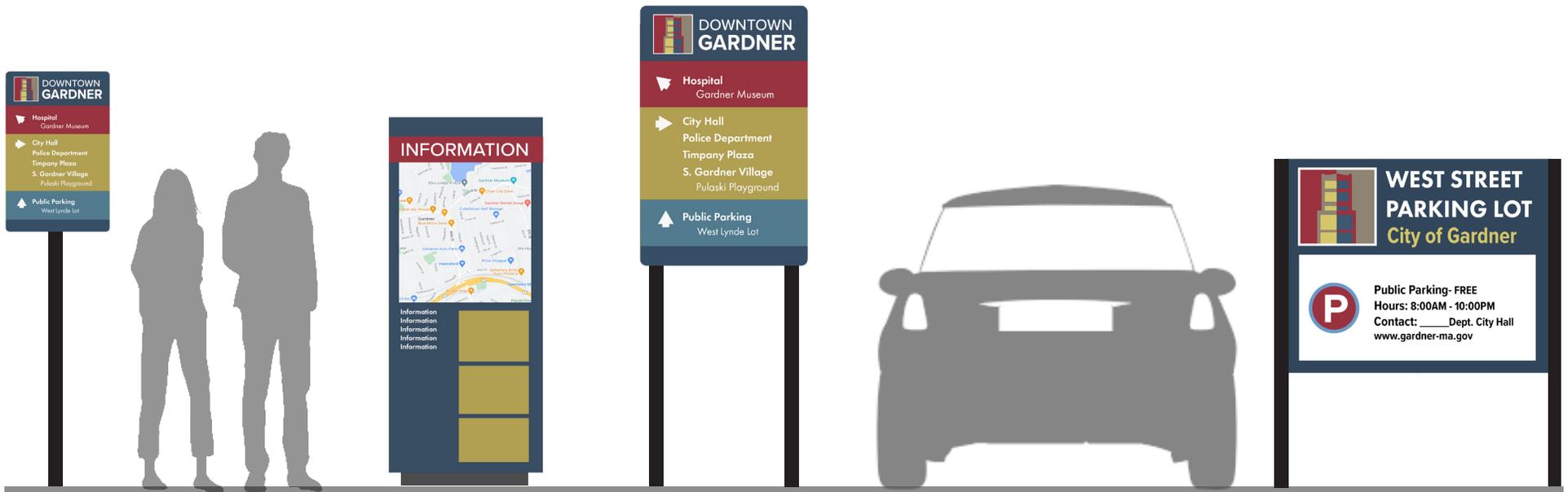
- **Timpany Plaza / S. Gardner Village**

- **Arrow pointing right from EB Parker St**
- Arrow pointing straight from WB Central St
- Arrow pointing slight right from SB Vernon St

Sign Design Options and Recommended Locations

Preferred Design Suite

This design incorporates the preferred design options for color palette, motif, and font, and illustrates an example of simple designs for different signage typologies. With the understanding that this design may only be developed as interim signage, only the directional and informational signs design typologies have been developed for this plan.



D1-P
Directional Sign
(Pedestrian Level)

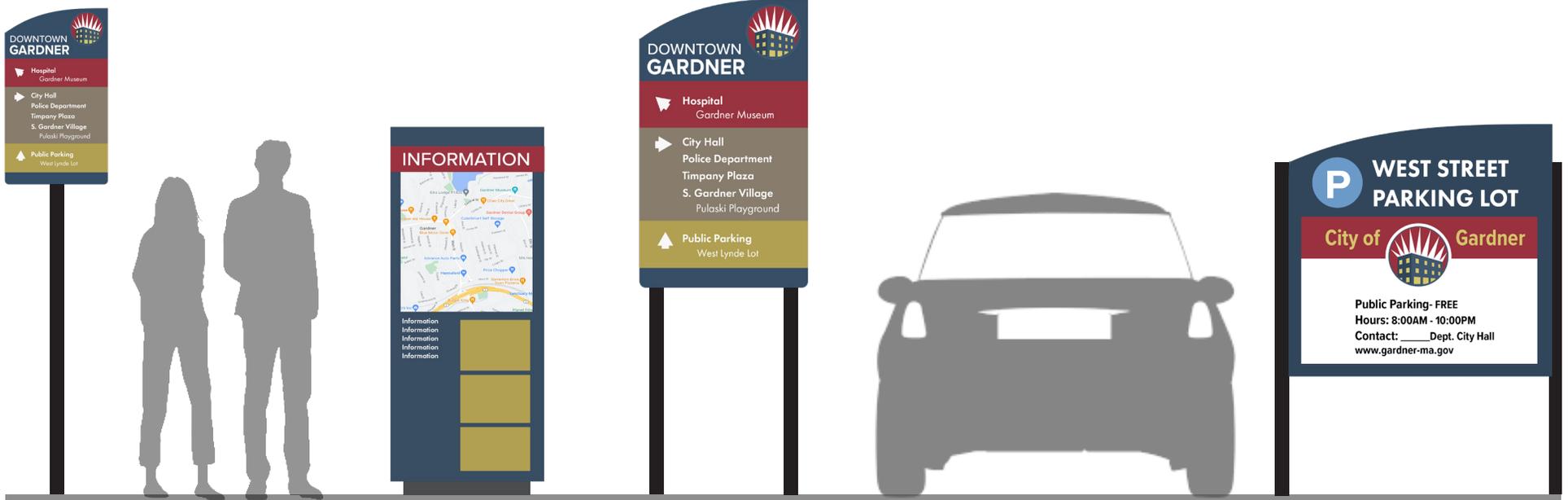
IN-1
Information Sign

D1-V
Directional Sign
(Vehicle Level)

ID-1
Identification Sign

Alternative Design Suite

This design incorporates a combination of other top design options considered for color palette, motif, and font, and illustrates an example of simple designs for different signage typologies. With the understanding that this design may only be developed as interim signage, only the directional and informational signs design typologies have been developed for this plan.



D2-P
Directional Sign
(Pedestrian Level)

IN-2
Information Sign

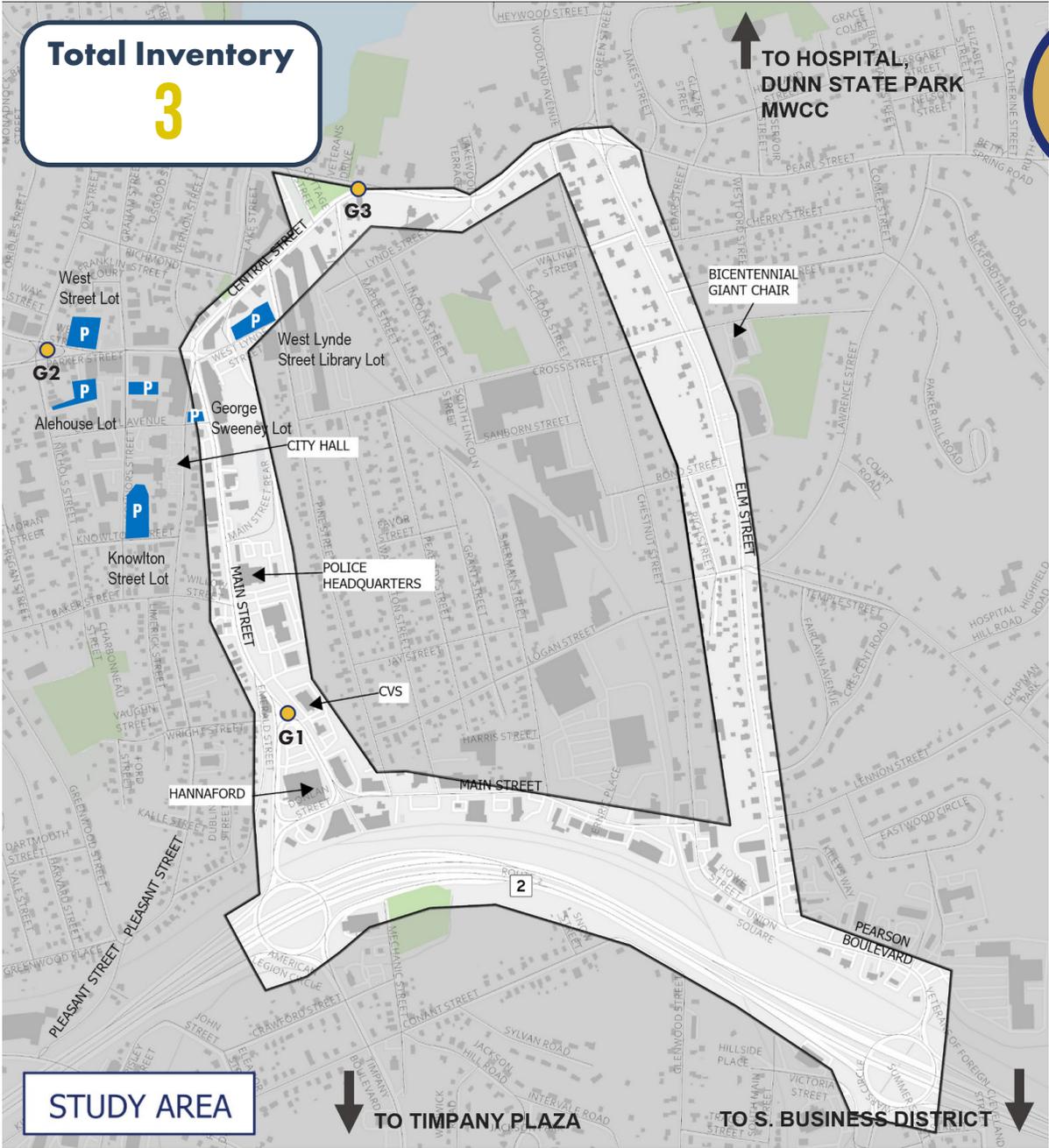
D2-V
Directional Sign
(Vehicle Level)

ID-2
Identification Sign

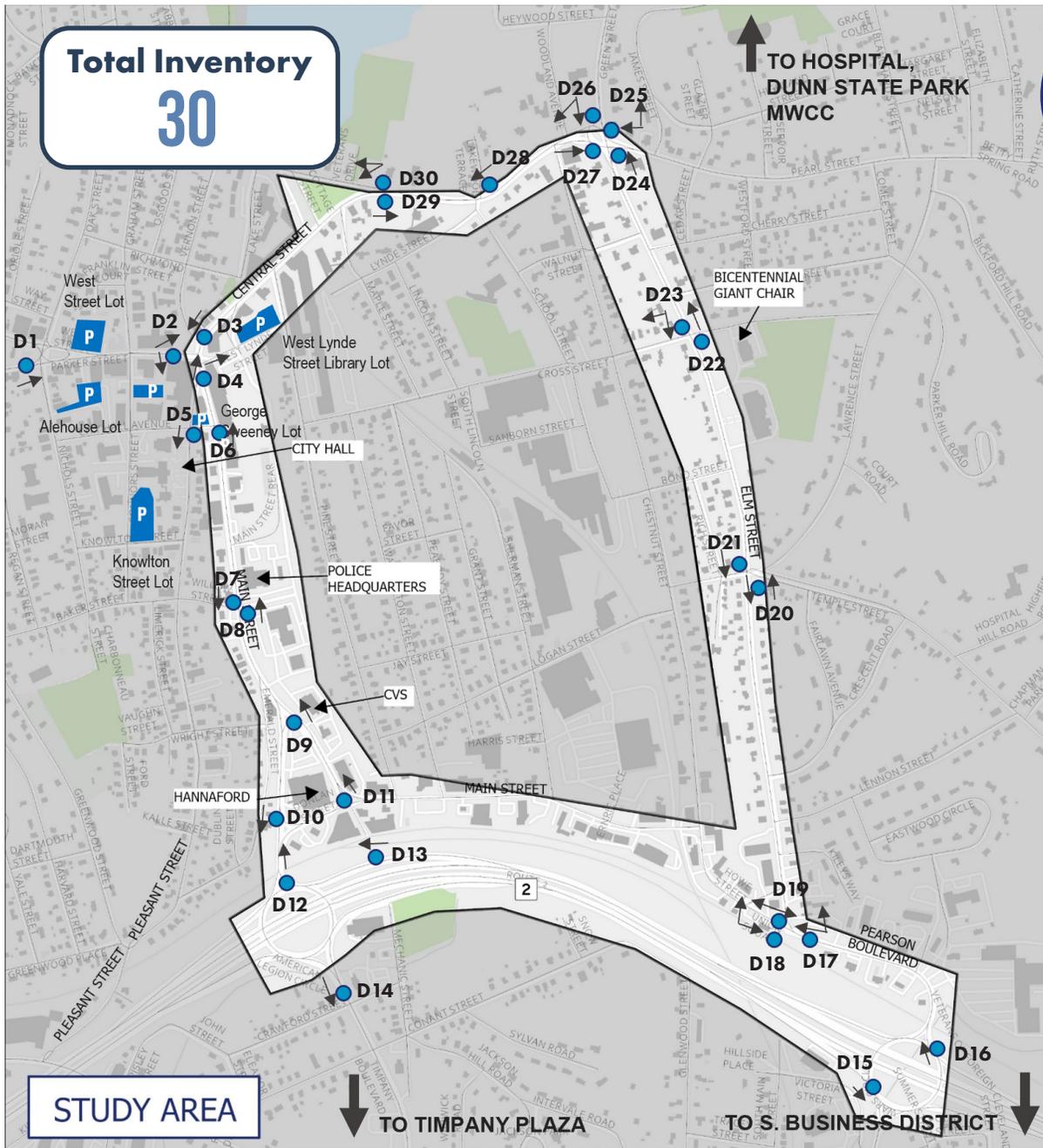
Proposed Signs-Gateway



With consideration that downtown Gardner is primarily accessed by visitors arriving from multiple directions, this plan recommends gateway signs placed just beyond the key, natural boundaries of the Main Street and commercial core area. Although these recommended locations are the most logical areas for welcoming visitors, the condition of nearby infrastructure and the types of adjacent uses may influence whether a different location is better suited to highlighting the downtown area in its best light.



Source: Google



Proposed Signs- Directional

Downtown Area

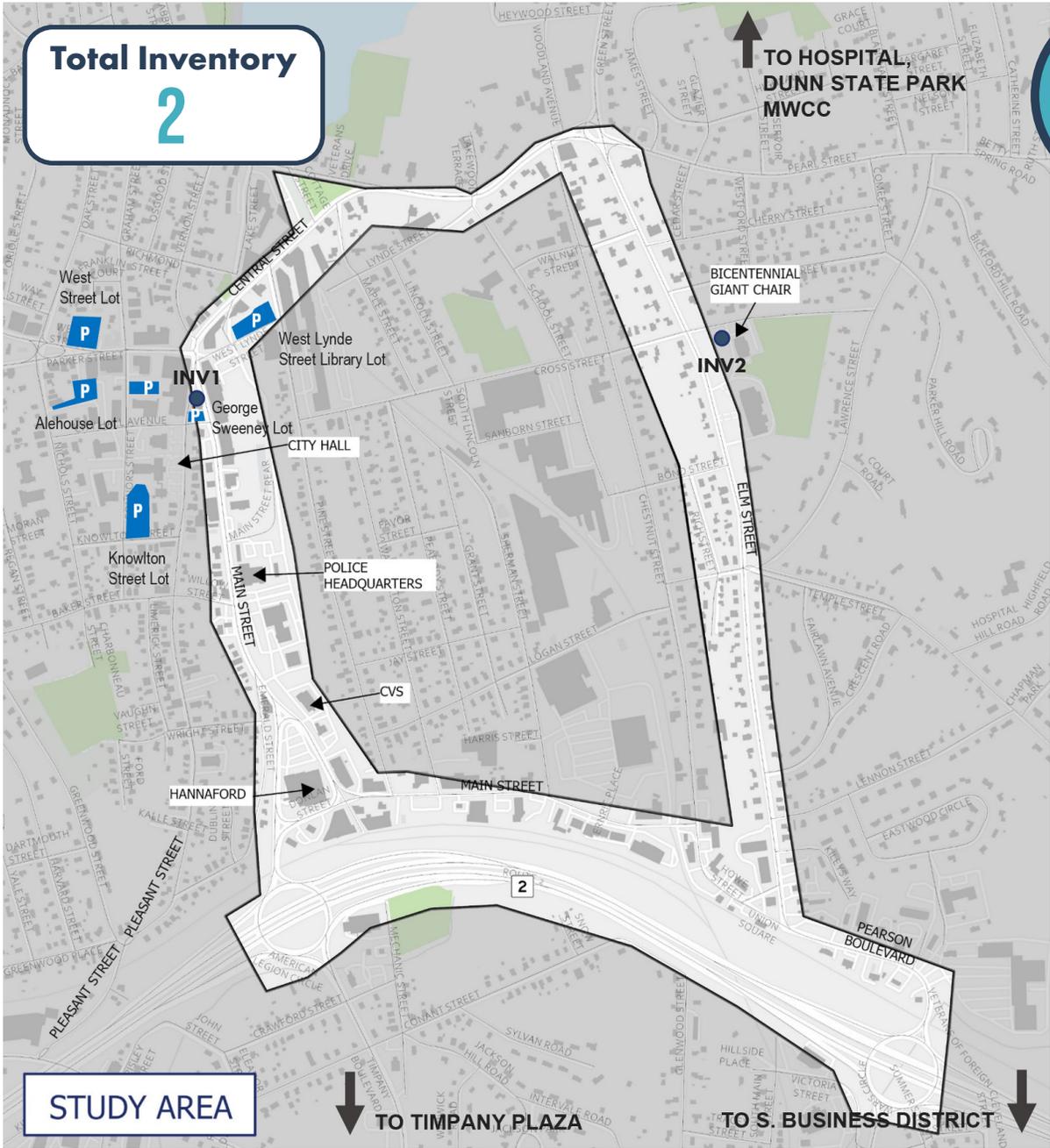
Of the four signage types investigated in this plan, the City intends to first focus on implementing new directional signage as a short-term priority.

Based on various factors including safety and an understanding of where specific destinations need to be reinforced, this map identifies the recommended locations of directional signage. These are specifically intended to provide direction to vehicles; however, as mentioned earlier in this plan, providing directions to bicyclists and pedestrians is also important. The City should review these locations and identify areas where a paired pedestrian-scale version of these signs would also be appropriate. Details about a selection of priority signs, including the language, recommended placement, and other specifications, can be found in the 'Recommended Priority Directional Sign Inventory Matrix.' An identification number has been included with each sign, for reference.

Beyond Downtown

Although this study is focused on the immediate downtown area, a need for directional signs to downtown from farther away was also identified during the planning process. These locations are necessary for drawing in visitors from regional roadways and reinforcing at regular intervals that a driver is heading in the direction of Downtown Gardner. Using the guidance provided in this plan, the City should further investigate these opportunities.

Proposed Signs-Information



Based on the understanding that pedestrians (including those who use wheelchairs and other assisted mobility devices) are the target user for information signage, two priority areas have been identified for recommended signs. The core commercial area of downtown is walkable, and a centrally-located sign can provide locally-relevant information. The Giant Chair is also a significant destination and a sign should provide information to visitors who may not be aware of other nearby destinations in the downtown.

An identification number has been included with each sign, for reference.



Source: Google

Preferred Design Option

The following renderings illustrate (generally) how the sign typologies recommended as part of the preferred design option might be viewed by a motorist during a journey.



◀ This image depicts how a directional sign might be incorporated from beyond the downtown



◀ This image depicts how signage might be incorporated once arriving into the downtown with a 1) directional sign, 2) identification sign, and 3) informational sign

Further Considerations for Implementation

Essential steps in working towards an effective, long-term downtown wayfinding strategy

In addition to best practice guidance shared throughout this report, the following steps are recommended to the City of Gardner to support the short-term implementation of wayfinding signage and to reinforce the effectiveness of a future, longer-term approach:

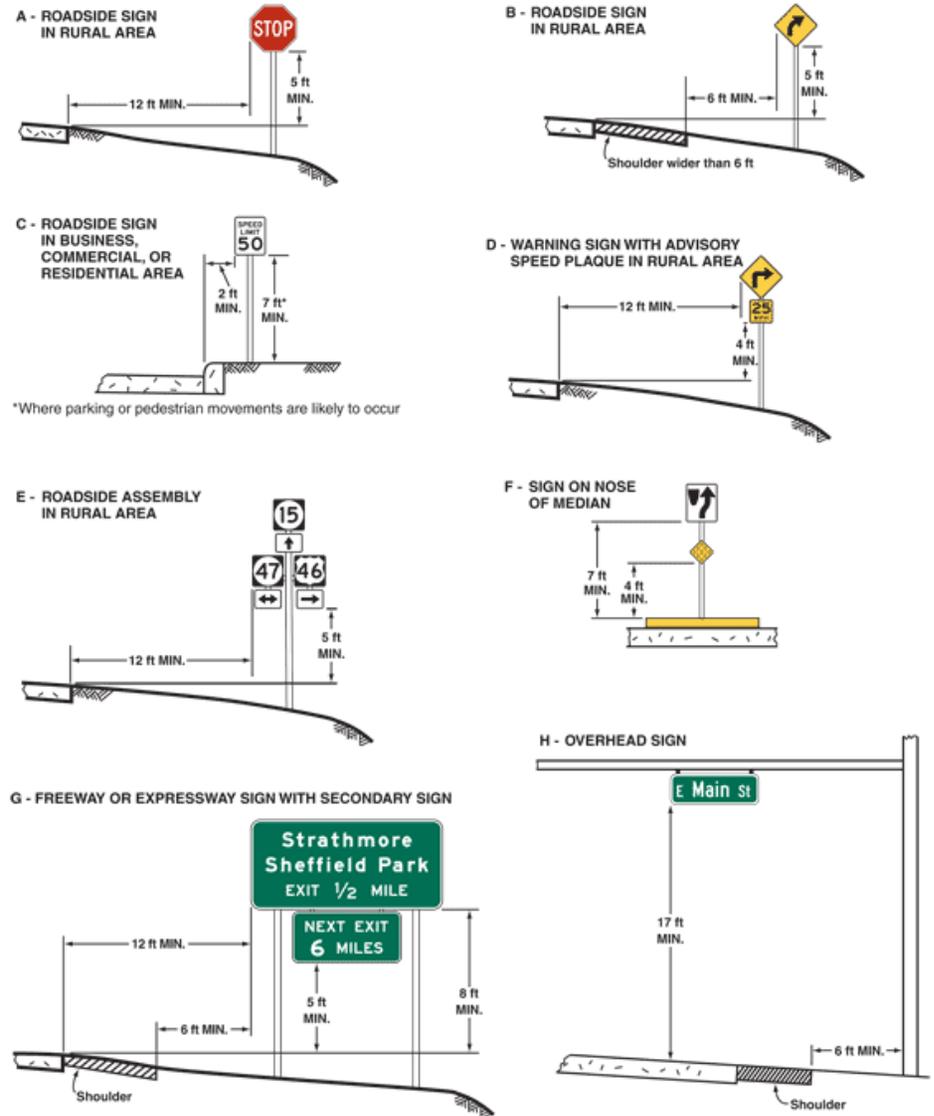
- **Develop a plan** like this when preparing a longer-term wayfinding plan
- **Secure consensus** through further public engagement to progress towards refined signage designs
- Identify **potential funding sources** for the development of Gateway signage (taking into consideration the need to fund potential phases)
- Formalize a list and map of final **defined sign locations**
- Engage DPW and other relevant parties to **check compliance prior to installation** e.g., ADA clearance, height above grade, conflicts with regulatory signage, the potential utilization of breakaway bases, etc.
- Consider how to prioritize and **integrate technology** into a longer-term, more user-friendly wayfinding system (e.g., lighting elements, digital travel information, interactive features, etc.)
- **Develop a maintenance plan** to support the long-term upkeep and re-evaluation of the wayfinding system, periodic cleaning and replacements due to wear, system expansion, etc.
- Consider how **other visitor platforms** can support and "speak to" the wayfinding system (e.g., web, social media, printed materials)
- Think of the improved physical components of wayfinding as part of a **broader wayfinding and destination strategy** for Downtown Gardner (e.g. tourism programs, restaurant promotion, special event advertising, etc.)

Sign Installation Considerations

This plan also takes into account how a sign might be installed, asking questions like: "What fixtures exist now and are they usable?" "What other street furniture or fixtures are nearby?" "What is the surface material and its condition?" "Are there any slopes to be aware of?"



Figure 2A-2. Examples of Heights and Lateral Locations of Sign Installations



Note:
 See Section 2A.19 for reduced lateral offset distances that may be used in areas where lateral offsets are limited, and in business, commercial, or residential areas where sidewalk width is limited or where existing poles are close to the curb.

Developing a Signage Inventory

By applying these key considerations to the directional signing process and other non-directional wayfinding needs, a sample Gardner Wayfinding Inventory Matrix was developed. This matrix outlines information about a priority selection of recommended signs in detail, such as the recommended positioning of the sign, the destinations to be identified on the signage (as informed by the planning process, to date, and the likely method of installation required. This sample has been developed as a valuable tool/template for the City to further expand upon as the next phase of establishing a long-term wayfinding signage program is pursued.

GARDNER SAMPLE INVENTORY MATRIX- PRIORITY DIRECTIONAL SIGNAGE								
DIRECTIONAL SIGNAGE - VEHICLE SCALE								
Loc ID	Road(s) / Intersection	Positioning / Traveler Direction	Typology (Which user/design?)	Existing Sign to Remove/Replace?	Size	Language (Bold indicates primary destination)	Arrow Direction(s)	Installation Method
D1	Parker St @ Nichols St	Triangular divider/island EB travel	D1-V	No		Historic Downtown Gardner	↑	Single post in concrete
						Hospital	↑	
						Police Department	↑	
						Bicentennial Giant Chair	↑	
						Dunn State Park	↑	
						Wachussett Community College	↑	
						Veterans Arena	↑	
D2	Parker St @ Pleasant St (North Main Street)	Light post directly west of Garden Pizza EB travel	D1-V	No		Public Parking	↑→	Existing post
						City Hall	→	
						South Business District	→	
						Monument Park	↖	
						Bicentennial Giant Chair	↖	
						Gardner Museum	↖	
						Wachussett Community College	↖	
D3	Central St @ Vernon St	Light post west of Gardner Travel Agency SWB travel	D1-V	No		Dunn State Park	↖	Existing post
						Public Parking	↖ ↗	
						City Hall	↖	
						South Business District	↖	
						Police Department	↖	
						Greater Gardner Chamber of Commerce	↖	
						Jackson Playground and Skate Park	↖	
D4	Pleasant St @ W. Lynde St	Light post directly south of Priscilla's Candy Shop NB travel	D1-V	No		Public Parking	←→	Existing post
						Hospital	↗	
						City Hall	←	
						Wachussett Community College	↗	
						Bicentennial Giant Chair	↗	
						Monument Park	↗	
						Greenwood Memorial Pool	↗	
D12	MA-68 Roundabout onto Donlan St	Triangular divider/island directly south of the rail bridge NB travel	D1-V	No		Historic Downtown Gardner	→	Single post in concrete
						Police Department	→	
						Greater Gardner Chamber of Commerce	→	
						Monument Park	→	
						Veterans Arena	→	
D13	Route 2 exit ramp to Downtown Gardner	Paired with existing roundabout sign EB travel	D1-V	No		Historic Downtown Gardner	↑	Stainless steel band
D17	Pearson Blvd @ Elm St	Directly south of Shell Service Station WB travel	D1-V	No		Historic Downtown Gardner	↑	Single post in concrete
						Bicentennial Giant Chair	→	
						Wachussett Community College	→	
						Gardner School Administration Building	→	
						Gardner School Campus	→	
						Jackson Playground and Skate Park	→	
						Historic Downtown Gardner	←	
D24	Elm St @ Pearl St	Above or near Yield sign directly west of the American Legion Building NB travel	D1-V	No		Hospital	↑	Single post in concrete
						Mount Wachussett Community College	↑	
						Gardner Museum	→	
						Dunn State Park	→	
						Greenwood Memorial Pool	←	
						Veterans Arena	←	
D26	Central St near Lynde St intersection	On utility post directly west of Mack Family Funeral Homes SWB travel	D1-V	No		Historic Downtown Gardner	↖	Existing post
						Monument Park	↗	
						Greenwood Memorial Pool	↗	
						Veterans Arena	↗	
D16	Vfw Circle off Route 2	Triangular divider/island on north side of roundabout NB travel	D1-V	Yes		Hospital	→	Single post in concrete
						Mount Wachussett Community College	→	
						Veterans Arena	→	
						Bicentennial Giant Chair	→	
						Gardner Museum	→	
						South Gardner Business District	→	





8

Appendices

Brand Options Summary
Fabricator Drawings
Public Survey Results

Brand Options Summary

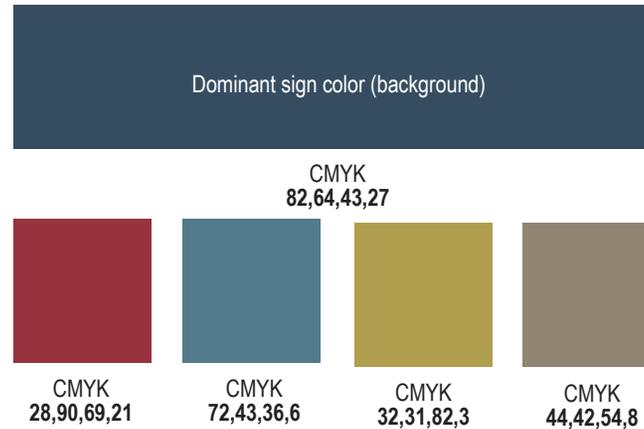
Preferred Design Option

This outlines the specifications for each of the design components used for the preferred signage design option. These details can be used for fabrication or other printing and media purposes.

Brand in Sample Context

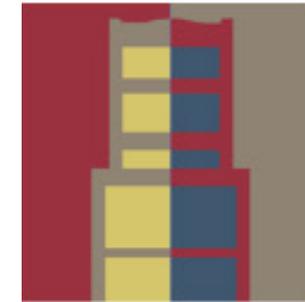


Color Palette and Usage

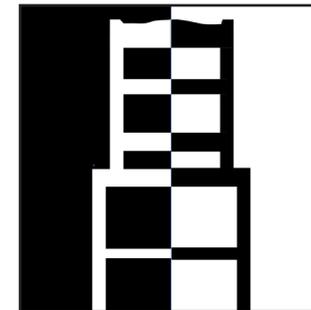


Motif and Usage

Full color for signage



Black and white (grayscale) for reference for other applications



Font Family and Usage

'Downtown Gardner' Text-

Proxima Nova- Bold

Significant Destinations Signage Text-

Futura PT- Demi

Notable Destinations Signage Text-

Futura PT- Book

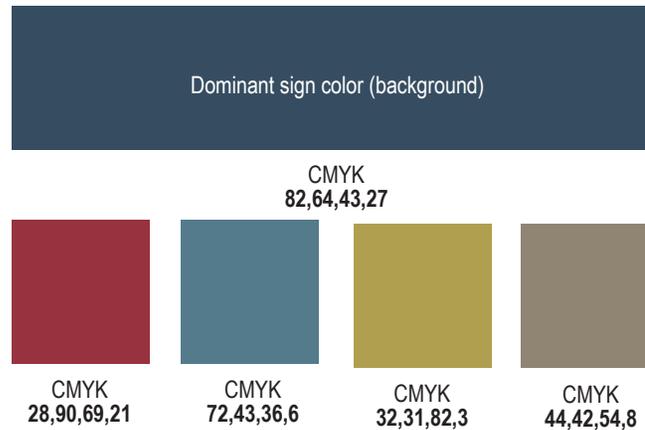
Alternate Design Option

This outlines the specifications for each of the design components used for the alternate signage design option. These details can be used for fabrication or other printing and media purposes.

Brand in Sample Context



Color Palette and Usage



Font Family and Usage

'Downtown Gardner' Text-

Proxima Nova- Bold

Significant Destinations Signage Text-

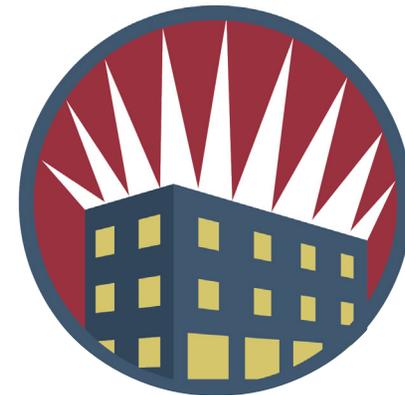
Futura PT- Demi

Notable Destinations Signage Text-

Futura PT- Book

Motif and Usage

Full color for signage



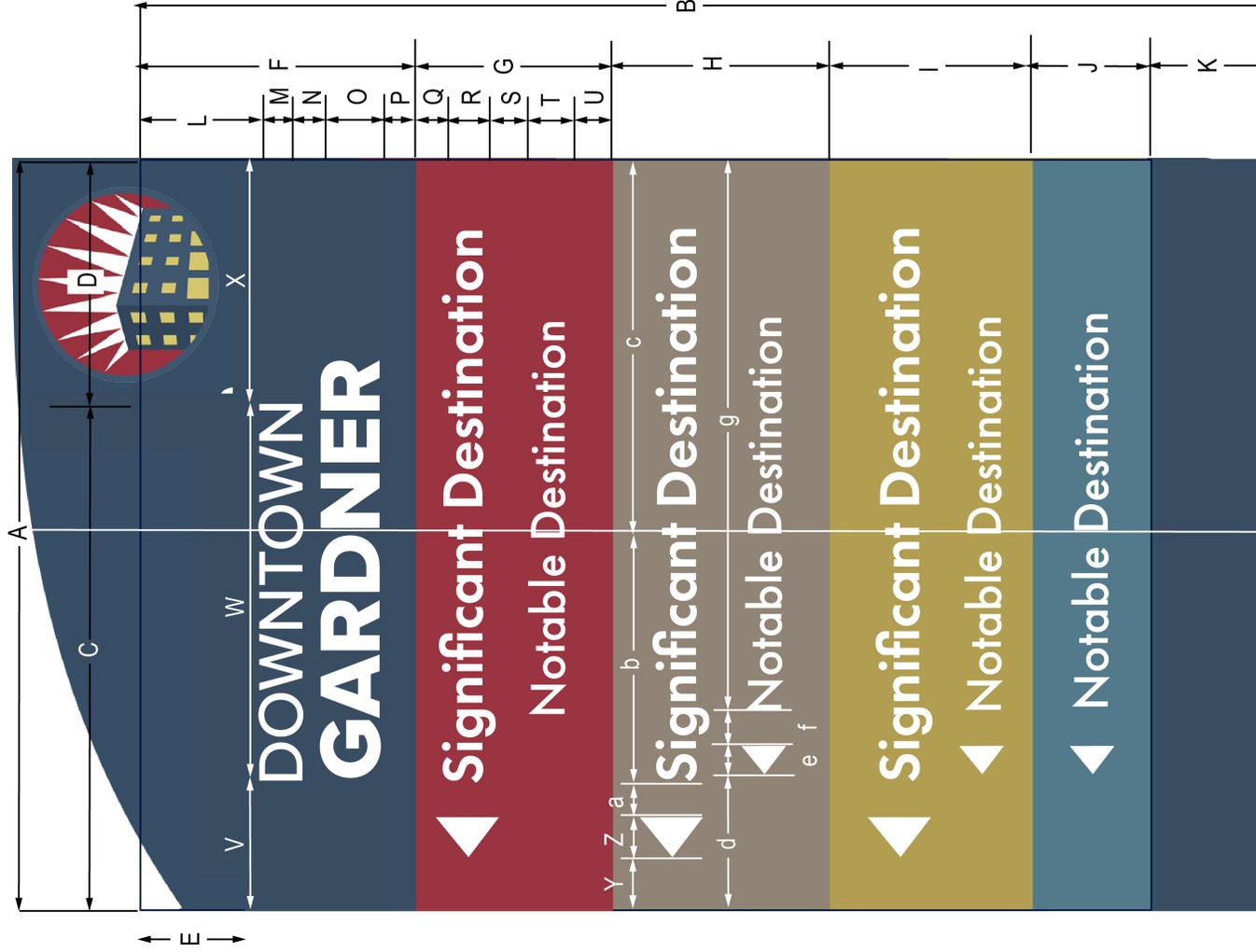
Black and white (grayscale) for reference for other applications



Fabricator Drawings

Directional Signage Option 2- Vehicle

This outlines the specifications for each of the design components used for the alternate signage design option as Option 1 incorporated the use of a standard shape. These details can be used for fabrication or other printing and media purposes.



D1-V
(Directional Sign for Vehicles- Typical)

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
36"	54.5"	24.3"	11.8"	5.4"	13.3"	9.5"	10.5"	9.7"	5.7"	5.8"
L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V
6"	1.5"	1.5"	2.8"	1.6"	1.7"	2"	1.7"	2.3"	1.8"	6.4"
W	X	Y	Z	a	b	c	d	e	f	g
17.5"	11.5"	2.5"	2"	1.5"	12"	18"	6.5"	1.5"	1.7"	26.4"

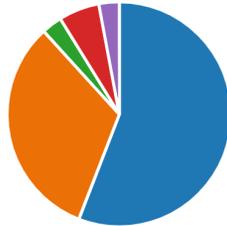
COLORS:
 LETTERS AND ARC INFILL-
 WHITE (APPLIED 3M, RETRORE-
 FLECTIVE)
 BACKGROUND-
 DK BLUE (CMYK 100,89,29,16)
 DESTINATIONS-
 RED (CMYK 17,100,89,7)
 LT BLUE (CMYK 80,35,4,0)
 YELLOW (CMYK 7,27,100,0)
 GREEN (CMYK 43,20,100,1)

Public Survey Results

1. Which of the following applies to you?

[More Details](#)

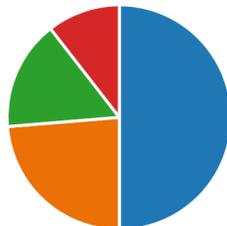
● I am a resident in Gardner	19
● I am an employee in Gardner	11
● I am a business owner in Gardner	1
● I am a student in Gardner	2
● Other	1



2. How often do you visit Downtown Gardner?

[More Details](#)

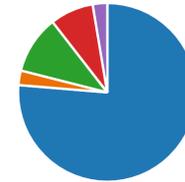
● Daily	19
● Weekly	9
● Monthly	6
● For special events	4



3. When you visit Downtown Gardner, which transportation mode do you usually take?

[More Details](#)

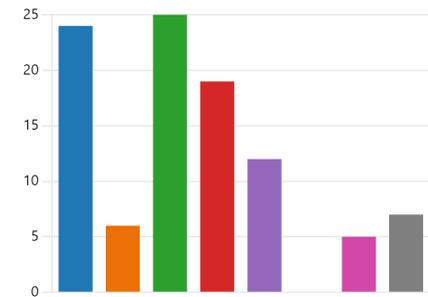
● I drive	29
● I ride a bus	1
● I walk	4
● I ride a bicycle	3
● Other	1



4. Which of the following types of destinations do you typically visit while in downtown Gardner? Select all that apply.

[More Details](#)

● Municipal (e.g. City Hall)	24
● Cultural (e.g. Bowling alley)	6
● Dining/Restaurants	25
● Shops	19
● Services (e.g. Bank)	12
● Institutions (e.g. Chamber of Co...)	0
● Recreational (e.g. Monument Pa...)	5
● Other	7

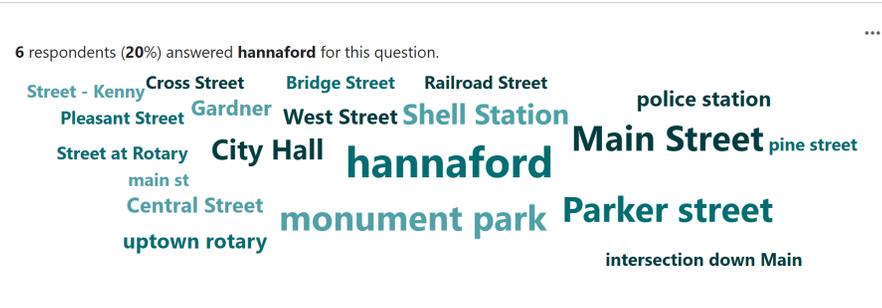


5. What are the streets/intersections/other landmarks that you perceive as the informal boundaries of Downtown Gardner?

[More Details](#) [Insights](#)

30
Responses

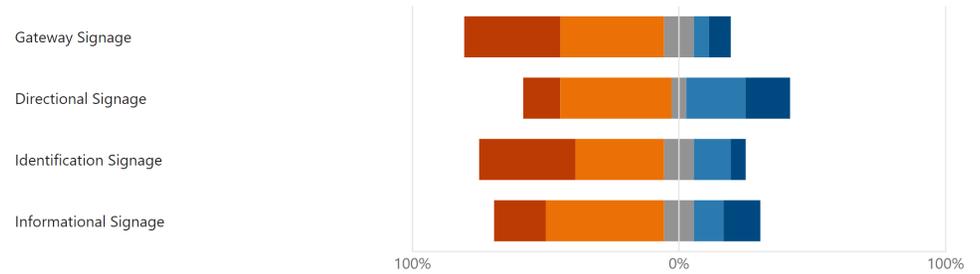
Latest Responses
 "West St., Pleasant St., Main St., Central St."
 "The paramount the health store "
 "Uptown rotary to Oak St Shell to City Hall to Police Dept "



6. How effective do you generally think the existing wayfinding signs in Gardner are in serving their purpose?

[More Details](#)

Very effective Somewhat effective Neither effective nor ineffective Somewhat ineffective Very ineffective



8. Please share any other thoughts you have about existing signage in Downtown Gardner.

[More Details](#) [Insights](#)

23
Responses

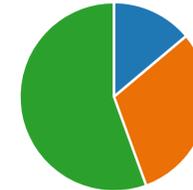
Latest Responses
 "Too small"
 "There should be more consistency in the appearance of each category of sig..."



7. Do you think the existing signage in Gardner is reflective of the City's character?

[More Details](#)

Yes 5
 No 11
 Somewhat 20

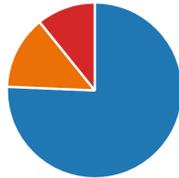


9. The symbol of "The Chair" has long been associated as a key, unique feature of Gardner, and is currently included on a number of signs throughout the City. Other features of the city may also be options for symbolizing the downtown, such as a historic mill referencing Gardner's history as a center for furniture production, or downtown's shopfronts and businesses.

Considering that a symbol on future signage will be designed/refined following this survey process, which of the following do you think best represents Gardner as a potential symbol?

[More Details](#)

● The Chair	28
● Wood/furniture mill	5
● Downtown shopfronts	0
● Other	4



10. The words below are some of the ways that Downtown Gardner has been described. Considering the character of Gardner and how you would like it to be perceived in the future, please rank the following words in order of how important you feel they should be in informing potential sign designs.

[More Details](#)



11. Please add any other descriptive words about Gardner that rise to the top of your list which weren't included in the previous question.

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

11
Responses

Latest Responses

2 respondents (18%) answered **City** for this question.



